

RABBIT CREEK COMMUNITY COUNCIL
DRAFT Minutes of board meeting of 11 October 2001

The meeting was called to order at 7:12 pm. Present were Mendenhall, Fries, Sell, Weinig, Miller, Van Fleen, Geuss, and Pease.

The minutes for September 13 were approved.

Treasurer's Report missing (treasurer not present).

RCCC boundaries: Our area includes a northeastern "panhandle" along Rabbit Creek east of Rabbit Creek Road, north of the ridgeline that separates the watersheds of Rabbit Creek and Little Rabbit Creek. Bear Valley Community Council's area is south of this ridgeline. Our "panhandle" is not shown on a Muni map of community councils at the Federation of Community Councils. Weinig will get a copy of BVCC's bylaws, and will propose an amendment to our bylaws specifying this boundary correctly.

Alan Tesche has submitted an ordinance to the Assembly requiring regular reviews of community council boundaries.

Announcements

AVAILABLE:

- The draft EIS for the Southern Intertie, in hard copy and on CD.
- "Annual Report of the Municipal Office of Planning, Development, and Public Works for July 2000-July 2001" (this details their reorganization and the resulting improvements)
- "Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report of the 2000 Program Year" [note by VMM: whose is this?]
- The public review draft of the "South-central Rail Network Commuter Study and Operation Plan" (Alaska Railroad Corporation)
- The Municipality's 202 budget is on the Web at 222.muni.org

ACTIONS BY PLANNING AND ZONING, PLATTING, ASSEMBLY:

- Prominence Point subdivision will be before the Assembly on October 16
- Subdivision of one 10-acre tract into 3 lots will be before the platting officer on November 5. Tract is south of England, north of Potter Heights Drive, and west of Potter Valley Road.

OTHER ANNOUNCEMENT:

- Scott Sell requests input for the RCCC annual survey by mid-November.
- There will be an open house on the Anchorage Coastal Trail extension on November 5. The place and time are not known yet.

Legislative report—Con Bunde

- The redrawing of legislative districts has been approved by the U.S. Department of Justice, but new districts combine some dissimilar Bush areas, and litigation is likely.

The Governor's Commission on Subsistence decided that subsistence is a psychological need, not a life need. On the other hand, there will be indefinite federal control of some subsistence take, since major resources like marine mammals and anadromous fish are managed by them already. (There followed a debate on the value of subsistence.)

Assembly report—Dick Tremaine

- The municipal budget is barely balanced this year, and a deficit is expected unless cuts are made. This is a new type of problem; it is partly due to Mystrom's tax cap, which removed \$20 million in property tax proceeds, and partly to our growing population, whose needs are expected to grow faster than revenues. Mayor Wuerch has cut administrative costs about as far as possible. Question: What did the Tischler report recommend?—New sources of income, such as development fees and sales tax.
- A rezoning proposal and amendment to the Hillside Waste Water Management Plan (HWWMP), for a tract on Bluebell, may come before the Assembly next week. Fries: there has been no notice of this to RCCC.

- Members of the Assembly, Planning staff, the Fire Department, and others toured the Hillside today to review needs for the Hillside District Plan and amendment of the HWWMP. Need for the Hillside Plan is agreed on by the mayor, Assembly, and developers. The mayor has not budgeted any funds for this Plan, so far.
- Cat licensing will come before the Assembly in February 2002.

Recreation Committee—Rabbit Creek Greenbelt trail

A group that lives on Canon Road was represented by Debbie McEwan (a number of other members also were present). There was a lengthy discussion. [I have reorganized these notes somewhat for the sake of continuity—VMM.]

McEwan asked how best to work with RCCC. She requested a copy of the Bylaws, and of recent Minutes (which are not yet on the FCC website). Fries mentioned that RCCC has been sending out notices to neighboring landowners and soliciting public input for some time.

McEwan asked when RCCC endorsed the Rabbit Creek Greenbelt Plan. The idea was endorsed by us in 1984 and adopted by the Assembly in 1985; the Trails Plan was similarly endorsed in 1992 and adopted in 1997 (Weinig and Pease). However, RCCC did not endorse a trail in the Canon Road area (Fries).

History of the trail concept (Geuss): it was debated hotly in the 1980's. The decision was not to try for a continuous trail along the creek from the Seward Highway to upper Rabbit Creek. However, a trail from lower DeArmoun to Rabbit Creek Road and Chugach State Park was envisioned, and greenbelt parcels have been acquired to that end. Geuss noted that residents elsewhere, such as the Birch Road trail north of Huffman, resisted similar trails, but that they were accepted after they were built and didn't cause an increase in crime. Trails increase the nearby property values. The Parks and Recreation Commission has approved it.

Is there a design for the trail?—None at present for the 20-acre parcel and near Canon Road, only for the eastern 120 acre parcel closest to Rabbit Creek Road. It is intended that the west end of the trail will dead-end at the creek, not continue into the Canon Road neighborhood.

Shouldn't we present a master plan for the entire trail through all parcels, as now envisioned, so residents can evaluate that?—We are just treating the 120 acres as a stand-alone area, at present. Pease added that there is merit in a trail connecting the intersection of Buffalo and 140th with the 120 acres, but the committee can't see how yet.

Is there a platted right of way?—Fries asked the Muni for information after the September meeting but has received no reply yet.

A resident pointed out that the 50-foot road easement along Rabbit Creek in that area might not give enough room for both road and trail.

Residents said that there is a *de facto* public trail through the area now, used by horses (which they estimate make up 75% of the total use), ARV's, snowmachines, etc. But there is a major consensus in the neighborhood group that they don't want it designated as a public trail, which seems likely to attract more people. "Trail" users now park in residents' yards and create other nuisances.

RCCC said that horses are not legally allowed in the Rabbit Creek Greenbelt, and asked what the Canon Road group thinks about them—The group does not object to horses. They will use the area anyway; if a new trail were not designed for horses, equestrians would just make another *ad hoc* trail alongside it.

RCCC said that managed access on the east end of the 120 acres might reduce pressure from trail users on Canon Road properties, not make it worse. Incursions by horses could be reduced by approaching equestrian groups in the area.

Pease said that the RCCC Trails Committee recognizes the need to solve the objections of the Canon Road neighbor group before building a trail there. Her committee found a 3,000 foot trail alignment on the 120 acres that goes up onto the bluff and back down to the creek. They propose to do this work with a \$5,000 grant already received from REI along with additional grant funds they are working to secure. It will be unpaved, and no motorized vehicles or horses will be allowed (as required for the Rabbit Creek Greenbelt). The cleared strip will be 8 feet or less; the trail tread will be 3 feet wide. To prevent unauthorized use, there will be bollards about 30 inches apart at the road access and the creek. A 50-foot-long foot bridge will cross the creek.

Will it be wheelchair accessible?—No; "primitive trails" need not be, as long as an adequate number of other trails in the municipality are accessible.

The group asked what office of REI approved the grant.—We applied to the "Great Places grant program" at their Seattle headquarters

Fries and Pease urged the Canon Road group to work with the RCCC Trails Committee to resolve their

differences. The best time to meet would be November, since Pease and Geuss will be away in October. RCCC action was needed at this meeting, however, because the next grant application is due by October 15.

Pease **moved** a resolution to endorse building a trail in the 120-acre eastern tract of the Rabbit Creek Greenbelt, and to apply for funds from the Recreational Trails Program for constructing the trail (**full resolution attached**). **Seconded** by Geuss; **passed** 9-0.

Members of the Canon Road neighborhood present in the audience asked that the Minutes reflect that they are unanimously opposed to building a new trail east of their area.

The Canon Road group stated that a RCCC newsletter said that RCCC endorsed a trail through the whole greenbelt. They also asked why only the Board of RCCC was allowed to vote, not members of the audience. Fries explained that a quorum of the general membership was not present at the meeting.

Coastal Trail: Kirk Johnson represented homeowners along the west side of the Old Seward Highway south of Rabbit Creek Road. He is a supporter of the Coastal Trail extension (and a member of Alaska Audubon's Board of Trustees). However, he opposes a proposed trail alignment because it would pass right through these residents' property.

Besides aesthetic objections, homeowners believe that their septic systems would be compromised by this trail construction, or that their required alternate sites would be.—It was suggested that they could get hooked up to the existing sewer line, but the group has been told that their sewage would have to be pumped to this line.

The group thinks that trail planners are trying not to cross driveways or the Anchorage Coastal Refuge, hence the backyard alignment. The group does not object to a trail within the Old Seward Highway right of way.

It appears that the state anticipates acquiring property for the trail by eminent domain. Miller suggests that state law doesn't list recreation as permissible grounds for eminent domain.

The draft EIS apparently does not include an alternative route along the New Seward Highway, according to what Jim Childers of the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Services told Johnson two days ago. Pease said that Childers told her today there would be an alternative along the New Seward Highway.

Johnson presented a homeowners' resolution that requests DOTPF and the Municipality to identify trail alternatives that avoid adverse impacts on both private property and the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge. RCCC suggested that they sign the resolution formally and submit it to us and other relevant bodies.

RCCC agreed that we should invite HDR, DOTPF, MOA, and ADF&G to appear at the November meeting and resolve the conflicting reports about proposed alignments.

There will be an open house on the Coastal Trail on November 5. The place and time are not known yet.

RABBIT CREEK COMMUNITY COUNCIL

October 11, 2001

RESOLUTION

Statement of need and opportunity:

The Rabbit Creek Community Council has a serious deficiency of public trails. There is currently only approximately one mile of trail or pathway within our nine-square-mile Council area. There is a high safety risk for those who bike or walk on the roads, especially our main roads.

Rabbit Creek Greenbelt presents a prime opportunity for development of a non-motorized unpaved trail to serve our community within Rabbit Creek Greenbelt west of Old Rabbit Creek Road. The Municipality has approved the concept of trails in the Greenbelt both in the Rabbit Creek Greenbelt Master Plan (1985) and the Anchorage Area-Wide Trails Plan (1997). The Community Council has identified a trail alignment that respects the environment and avoids impacts to neighbors.

Therefore, be it resolved:

The Rabbit Creek Community Council endorses the development of a non-motorized, unpaved trail within the approximately 100-acre eastern tract of Rabbit Creek Greenbelt abutting Old Rabbit Creek Road and further endorses solicitation of grants and contributions to develop the trail, including a grant from the Recreational Trails Program. The Community Council will continue to work with the Municipality and community members to identify other trail access to the Rabbit Creek Greenbelt.