

RABBIT CREEK COMMUNITY COUNCIL
Minutes of Board Meeting, 8 July 1999

President Sell called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm. Present were Sell, Miller, Weinig, Ross, Seppi, Fries, and Mendenhall. Mendenhall took minutes.

Minutes of past meetings were approved unanimously: 8 April (Weinig/2nd Miller), 13 May (Miller/2nd Mendenhall), and 11 June (amended to reflect that Grunblatt also was present; Mendenhall/2nd Fries).

Treasurer Ross reported that 6 new members have joined the Council, bringing the total to 182. 36 members is now the quorum for a general Council meeting. The treasury totals \$1,145.35.

Announcements: A wood chipper is now available at the Carl Eid Ski Jump parking lot. Deliver slash yourself, or call 267-5020 for free pickup.

The Downtown Market is open. Sell has brochures on it.

Our resolution concerning the school proposed for a 50-acre tract on Elmore Road between Huffman and DeArmoun has been sent to the Assembly, Community Councils, and School District. Fries attended two meetings concerning this school site. A contractor has been hired to do a traffic analysis. Fries asked to see a full site analysis, but apparently none has been done since 1984. Superintendent Chrystal stated that the school site is final. More meetings will take place in future months.

Denise Knapp reported that she is filing complaints about dump trucks exceeding the speed limit on Rabbit Creek Road. The trucks go especially fast when they are heading east empty. Fries complained about ATVs speeding on roads through her neighborhood. Sell suggested calling Lt. Griffith, local liaison at APD, about both problems.

Representative Con Bunde handed out materials concerning the Permanent Fund Dividend vote in September: the Alaska Legislative Digest, and a publication issued by the Alaska Permanent Fund Corporation.

Wildfire risk amelioration: Gary Bullock of the Anchorage Fire Department made a presentation. Current fire danger is high because of this year's dry weather and the many beetle-killed spruces. Also, shrub thickets and tall grass have increased in Hillside forests over the years, and housing density is increasing. At present there is a ban on open burning throughout the state.

Forest fires have happened this year, near O'Malley Road last spring and in Kincaid Park on 4 July. If either fire had occurred during high winds, houses would have been burned. A fire starting at Potter Marsh could burn as far as Abbott Road in a few hours. Fireworks can start

fires, as well being as illegal. People were encouraged to call 911 if they heard fireworks on July 4 this year, which kept AFD very busy.

AFD has received \$340,000 from the Federal Emergency Management Agency for wildfire risk reduction. They have contracted with a "hotshot" crew of 20 to clear dead spruce from municipal parks, the Equestrian Center, HLB property, etc. Priorities for snag removal are along boundaries with residential neighborhoods and near trails. The crew also helps fight fires here and elsewhere. Part of the FEMA money is paying for the chipper and a public information campaign.

Bullock urged residents to create a "defensible space" around their homes. This means removing dead spruce, removing all spruce branches within 10 feet of the house or its roof, and allowing mainly less-flammable plants to grow in a zone 30 feet wide around the house. "Less flammable" includes broad-leafed shrubs or trees, flower beds, and well-trimmed lawns. Clearing trees away helps if grass is kept trimmed; tall grass is flammable. Roofs made of wooden shakes are highly flammable; other types are better. Firewood should be stored away from the house. The driveway should be wide enough for a fire truck and have space for it to turn around. More information can be found on videos (can be borrowed for free from Blockbuster and AFD) and a web site.

AFD would help protect houses against a forest fire to the best of their ability and manpower. However, they can't protect every house in case of a large fire, so they would choose houses with the best chance of being saved, i.e. those with defensible space (this is called "triage"). Homeowners likely would be allowed to stay and help defend their houses, although the Anchorage Police Department could order an evacuation. Homes should have backup generators, since a large fire would cut off electricity in the area.

Homeowners can improve AFD's ability to respond by displaying their addresses clearly. They also should visit the fire station and confirm that AFD's "taxi map" shows each street and house.

Bullock answered numerous questions. Shake roofs might be protected somewhat with a sprinkler or soaker hose. Fire retardant chemicals only protect shakes for a short time, and none is available in Anchorage. Weinig said that concrete "shakes" are available in California. Firewood containing beetles could spread insects only if the logs were intact; they should be cut up or de-barked. The area covered by AFD extends south to Girdwood. The smoke threat to homeowners from a wildfire is minimal, unless it's so thick you can't see your hand in front of your face.

Other AFD issues: There was concern about paramedic services, since there are no ambulances south of Tudor Road. AFD has a paramedic at each South Anchorage fire station. This person is dispatched to 911 calls in a fire truck and starts treatment while the ambulance is coming.

Assemblywoman Abney asked whether the Municipality has cut AFD's budget this year. Bullock said that some personnel are not being replaced and new ambulances and fire trucks are being deferred. Abney stated that she had believed Mayor Mystrom agreed not to cut AFD's funds.

Census 2000: Chuck McGee gave a presentation. The Census Bureau made door-to-door visits in April and May to verify addresses of all residential units. They will be re-checking some places in August after the Muni comments on their draft.

"Census day" is 1 April 2000. Census forms will be sent to all residences; about 1/6 will be long forms, the rest short. Forms will not be sent to PO boxes, since census data are collected according to residences rather than individuals. Census forms will be carried by hand to people with PO box address. Workers will also count people in hotels, convents, jails, homeless shelters, etc., and will follow up on forms that are not returned.

The Census Bureau is hiring 750 people and encourages local residents over the age of 18 to apply. Pay starts at \$16.88/hour.

People to be heard: Students Lizzie Evans, Aubrey West, and Rochelle Yates (not present) asked RCCC to support a park and playground in the South Goldenvue area. Nancy Lee Evans assisted them. Moen Park is in their neighborhood, but is not developed; Storck Park does have some play equipment but is too far to walk. They presented a list of wishes, including picnic tables, swings, slides, and bars. The girls propose to raise money; they have \$14 so far.

Fries will draft a resolution supporting development of the park. Abney said the CIP contains an item to start working on the project soon. Board members suggested to the girls that they make the same presentation at HALO and the Assembly.

Assembly Representative Abney reviewed upcoming issues. A bill would restrict sale of alcoholic beverages at service station convenience stores; it is now permitted throughout Anchorage. Alan Tesche's bill on the Comprehensive Plan will probably be introduced on 1 August.

The RCCC Survey results were discussed briefly. Sell reported that 1603 forms were sent out and about 11.5% returned. Almost all respondents supported a lot size of 1 acre or larger. Sell handed out summaries of responses and comments. We discussed what use RCCC should make of the survey. Actions of the Board should reflect the residents' preferences as expressed in the survey.

The Nominating Committee was reminded by Sell that Board elections are only 6 months

away (January 2000); 6 to 8 candidates will be needed.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 (Weinig/2nd Fries).