

RUSSIAN JACK COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

6:30 PM, Wednesday, February 12, 2025

At Zion Lutheran Church – 2100 Boniface Parkway

Present: Ed Leach, Kathleen Plunkett, Daniel Volland, Clayton Chapman, Anita Peakes, Summer Bond, Tara & Nevin Blankenship, Yarrow Silvers, Sam Garcia, Daniel George, Dan & Sherry Wright

Present via ZOOM: Mercedes Colbert, Andrew Gray, Seth Tigarian, Genevieve Mina, Remington Purnell, Karen Bronga, Ted Eischeid, Margo Bellamy, Hedy Eischeid

Meeting was called to order at 6:35 pm by President Clayton Chapman

1. Welcome and Land Acknowledgement We are meeting on Dena'ina Land – grateful for their care and sharing the land with us.

2. Legislative report (3 minutes each)

Sen. Bill Wielechowski (Seat K) - Mercedes Colbert provided the report – First bill had to do with rejecting a pay raise for legislators. Discussions are ongoing re: education funding. Looking at ways to fill the deficit in the state budget. Election reform bill is getting a lot of attention SB 64. SB 22 is the companion bill that Ted spoke about – re: financial education in school. SB 18 to ban cell phones in schools, which they got the idea from a student at Bettye Davis East High School. Happy to help with CAPSIS. February 24 is the deadline to have them to legislators. Town Hall meeting scheduled March 8 at 11:30 am with location TBD.

Sen. Forrest Dunbar – (Seat J) Seth Tigarian provided the report – Filed 9 bills – 5 already have received hearings. He provided information on the various bills dealing with mental health, foods, etc. Their office is available to help with any state-related issues people are experiencing. Clayton asked how they confirm residency for those applying for PFD.

Rep. Genevieve Mina – Seat 19 – Biggest issue for legislature is education funding. HB 69, would increase BSA by \$1000 this year and \$400 in the next two years, is currently in Committee. Inflation has risen about 40% so we need to recognize this and correct funding accordingly. There is a bill regarding defined benefits for state employees. Many are awaiting SNAP funding, with turnover of employees exacerbating the problem, as well as training new employees. Working on capital budgets and CAPSIS requests. She quickly spoke about HB's regarding health care costs, etc. Impact of federal freezes was covered by Andrew Gray Judiciary Committee meeting and he may be able to provide more information on the non-state entities.

Rep. Ted Eischeid – Seat 22 Spoke about education committee – HB 69. He has received around 170 emails from people about education funding. Filed his first bill last week – HB 88 tuition waivers for families of disabled vets, firemen and peace officers. HB 90 is a financial literacy bill that requires education of students in this area. STIP list is done every 4 years and deals with transportation improvement projects. Military & Veteran Affairs committee will meet next week. He's enjoying the committee process of the legislature as it is very informative. He is missing his family in Anchorage. Saturday 10 – 12 noon he will be at Kava's to talk to constituents. He also has a newsletter that comes out regularly.

Rep. Andrew Gray - Seat 20 - Spoke about sexual assault laws of minors and it's consent issues. Hearing from refugee organizations in Alaska and new Administrative directives. Book Club / Podcast updates were given. Kathleen will be in Juneau on February 27th and will check in with all the legislators. Rural Cap gave the most insightful testimony – with numerous building projects. Contractors are choosing to do other construction projects that don't rely on federal monies. One day funding freeze has a trickle effect. Would contracts have to be re-bid? They may welcome another contractor, but Alaska doesn't have a lot of choice, in particular with rural Alaska construction. Alaska gets more federal funding than any other state.

3. Assembly report (3 minutes each)

Christopher Constant Seat 1B – no report

Daniel Volland Seat 1L – was present and reported that the Assembly is pausing on the multifamily design standards until 2028. Development community presented issues about costs and that was the primary catalyst. Connexes can be used for food/beverage options. There are around 200 of these types of businesses, which makes it a very competitive market. AK Native Heritage Center was added to local landmark register. One point access for MOA jobs is being created. Sales taxes are narrowed down to one version. February 28 a worksession will be held at City Hall on the sales tax issue, March 5 at 6 pm at Wilda Marston and March 8 at 4 at Mountain View Library.

Tara asked about what MOA is doing about crime in Anchorage. Recruitment / retention is a big part of what is happening to make Anchorage more competitive. Childcare for MOA employees (including police) is part of that. Camp abatements are actively happening. Ongoing work on police accountability. An independent review by the Mayor is looking at shooting incidents. Non-lethal ballistic purchasing is being discussed. Tara's daughter didn't want to go to Fred Meyer's after dark anymore because of someone on meth being on site, which is an unenforceable crime (unless they have meth on their person). There's a lot of petty crime and theft that seem to go unpunished.

The current MOA attorney's office has made strides to clear backlog. There is a need for behavioral health in Anchorage. Behavioral task force makes recommendation and funding from alcohol taxes is part of the plan. Prevention programs are another upstream effort.

Clayton has had several run ins with enforcement with the feeling that unless there is a murder, it is put on a lower priority. Basic enforcement (fingerprinting, etc) or follow up seems to be neglected. Wondering why it seems like there is no enforcement when things are reported? Ed responded that more police presence would help, but the spending cap affects hiring potential.

There is a revolving door at DOC – Sam Garcia is with Anchorage Recovery Center. There is a 6 month wait for those recovering from addiction. They are opening a residential facility that can hold 60 - 80 people to open in March over by Glenn Highway (frontage road).

Karen Bronga Seat 5H - Mandatory ID checks will be rolled out March 1 for purchase of alcohol at bars or restaurants. If they have a red stripe on their ID, they are not supposed to purchase alcohol. Chugach range access is delayed for a design for Basher parking area. Jaywalking was considered to repeal, but the Mayor wanted more concrete data. It hasn't really

been enforced, so wasn't pursued. The efforts should be more focused on making the roads safer. She believes there needs to be a bit more nudge for those experiencing homelessness. Housing / shelter, etc can be offered, but if we aren't offering behavioral change, we aren't moving forward. Day labor is another issue that can help get people out of the cycle of homelessness. MOA can help provide contract labor. One idea for homeless labor is to contract them to help clear out the downed trees in our Anchorage parks. Karen believes that the Mayor is doing a great job with abatement in parks. An example was a motorhome near Creekside Elementary for 250 days finally moved. Need to generate ideas to keep public using RJSP or we will have the same camper issue this coming summer. AO 2025 – to expand principle liability to parents if children bring a weapon to school and requiring reporting a weapon lost or stolen within 24 hours of realizing it is missing. April 8 will have public testimony on this issue.

George Martinez Seat 5I – no report

4. School board report (3 minutes each) – Margo Bellamy provided a report copy of preliminary budget that assumes no revenue or BSA increase. Next School Board meeting is Tuesday, February 18 and they will take public comment. They have to submit their budget to MOA by March 1. Some of the budget cuts are increasing class sizes K – 4 from 22-26. Middle School/HS classes could go up to 36 students. 200 Retiring teaching positions will not be filled. Others 13 school nurses, 12 library positions, Ignite program will be eliminated, all middle school sports, HS swimming, hockey and gymnastics eliminated. Choice of school may not be available to staff. Right-sizing plan includes closure of Nunaka Valley and Lake Hood schools, but this hasn't been voted on yet. 2026 Preliminary Budget is available at [http://go.boarddocs.com/ak/asdk12/Board.msf/files/DDL3P407C520/\\$file/FY26%20Budget%20Brief%202.4.25%20Work%20Session.pdf](http://go.boarddocs.com/ak/asdk12/Board.msf/files/DDL3P407C520/$file/FY26%20Budget%20Brief%202.4.25%20Work%20Session.pdf)

5. FCC report – Kathleen Plunkett – Great presentation at the January meeting about the assessment process given by Jack Gadamus, with MOA assessor. You can see what has happened to your personal property assessment on the Assessor web page. Ed talked to us about how the assessment / mill rate process happens.

6. Neighborhood/Community Announcements - Earl Malpass, Airport Manager, with Merrill Airfield will be coming to present a runway construction update with Eric Jordt, Engineer at our March meeting.

FCC is holding training meetings for officers. Clayton and Kathleen plan to attend.

Sam Garcia, Director of Operations for Anchorage Recovery Center; Anita Peakes – Executive Director; Summer Bond – Case Manager. He made an open invitation for anyone interested in taking a tour of the facility. Detox seems to be the bottleneck. They will have 15 beds for the detox, with potential to grow to 160 beds. Pretty high staff / client ratio with medical staff on site. Anchorage Recovery Center is under Zinnia Health and plans to integrate mental health program. This is a much needed facility in Anchorage, and several expressed appreciation.

Yarrow Silves is running to fill Karen Bronga's Assembly seat. She is passionate about open and transparent government. Homelessness, mental health, economic opportunity, getting rid of red tape are some of the things she is passionate about.

Daniel George is running as a candidate for Anchorage Assembly for North Anchorage seat. Almost 1/3 of the total community councils are in our area – we have 11. He's worked in local, state and federal government. Parks are the vibrant heart of our community and are not being utilized in the way they were meant. What is good for the neighborhood is good for the city. He recognizes the effect crime is having on our neighborhoods. Danielforanchorage.com

Next meeting is scheduled for March 12th at 6:30 pm.

Meeting adjourned at 8:37 .pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:
Sherry Wright, Secretary