

Birchwood Community Council

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Minutes

Wednesday, May 10, 2017, 7-9 PM

Beach Lake Chalet, 17611 S Birchwood Loop Rd

1. Call to Order 7:00

2. Approval of April 2017 Minutes (available at the meeting) Approved as written

3. Announcements

- a) We will not meet in June or July; next meeting is August 9th.
- b) Debbie briefs us on a proposal to re-zone part of Powder Reserve from R0 to R1 – it's a small area adjacent to the Glenn Hwy. (area once proposed for commercial, outlet mall). This would change from allowing commercial to 1-acre single family residential. Eklutna says that they intend the same quality and price point of nearby existing homes.
- c) We've been invited to a Memorial Day ceremony on the Park Strip on May 29 from 10 to 11. RSVPs requested.
- d) We received annual report from the Equal Rights Commission.
- e) Dave Wolfe is leaving; we need a new FCC rep. *Jill nominates Gretchen Wehmhoff as our new FCC representative, Bobby seconds, there is no objection, Gretchen is unanimously approved as our new FCC representative.*

4. Reports

Amy's assembly report: The Assembly passed the **rezone** in the Eklutna area for the Ernie Turner Center with CERAB and Eklutna CC support. Title 21 has issues that still need to be addressed – which we knew it would. A) the tank farm by the port wants to upgrade and make safety improvements, and currently this would trigger a complete new variance process. The owners don't want to go through that and are trying to work it out. The issue will be before assembly in next meeting. B) a suggestion to allow a youth member (age 16 or 17) was put before the Assembly; it has been tabled until June. Amy has concerns. For example, should a youth member be there for executive sessions; would youth have time to attend all the work sessions and committee meetings. Amy thinks the Youth Advisory Commission provides an adequate venue; perhaps they could add a report from that committee each meeting. C) Jill asks about fast track of development near Terrace Lane per settlement of Landfill methane issue. Amy says there has been an executive session but nothing that she can elaborate on. She refers us to newspaper articles on the subject.

- a) FCC Report: none this month
- b) CBERRRSA Road Board Report: <http://www.muni.org/Departments/works/operations/streets/Service/Pages/CBERRRSARoadBoard.aspx> no report; see Aurora Borealis discussion under Old business
- c) Parks and Recreation Report: <http://www.muni.org/Departments/ERparks/> - The McDonald Ctr continues to work to meet its budget; The new single track trails in Mirror/Edmonds Lake park are almost ready to open; Chugach Mountain Bike Riders would like to proceed with Phase 2, about 2 more miles of trail, but did not receive a second recreational trails grant. The Parks and Rec Board will consider whether those trails could be funded under our 2018 capital budget. More information will be forthcoming this fall. John will work with R&M (a contractor to the municipality) to conduct an inventory of the

2016-2017 board:

Kevin McNamara, Chair; Debbie Ossiander, Vice Chair & CERAB rep Tony Vita, Road Board; Lexi Hill, Secretary & Parks and Rec rep; Dave Wolfe, Secretary for Publicity; Barbara Trost, Member at large

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Northwest Quarter (including the 8 acres) as the first step of planning how we want to manage/ develop that area. He noted that the Beach Lake Master Plan called for more passive recreation (trails, natural areas) than development.

- d) Chugiak Eagle River Advisory Board – no report
- e) Treasurer’s report no change – still at \$43.
- f) Birchwood Patrol Report – Jeff is not here tonight. Debbie has been hearing good things about Birchwood Patrol and that Powder Reserve would like something like that...they are working to establish one in their area.

5. Appearances:

a) **Colin Hodges, Transit Planner for the Muni, on the new bus service plans**

Colin starts by noting the changes that affect our area: changes to Route 102, which currently serves Chugiak/Peters Creek, Birchwood, Eagle River and downtown. Ridership has been declining over time. To address the overall declining ridership and budget cuts, transit planners started ‘Anchorage Talks Transit’. They wanted to replace the ad hoc way they had been responding to budget cuts with a more comprehensive look at how they should be spending their budget. They heard that people wanted more frequent service; and in order to do that within their budget, they would need to consolidate routes. Starting in October, 102 will have just 5 trips in the morning and 5 in the evening, and will only go between the Eagle River transit center and downtown transit center. There will be no regular scheduled service farther out than the Eagle River transit center.

Farther out would be served by AnchorRides (and AnchorRides Premium). AnchorRides is not expanding their eligibility criteria. Debbie notes that when busses were reviewed in 2008-9 (and we lost service), she was told that the AnchorRides had to be within half a mile of an established route. How are we providing service farther out now that there are no scheduled routes? The premium service, slightly more expensive, is not subject to those federal requirements, and will serve this entire area.

Share-a ride/ van pooling will also be re-worked. Currently it does not serve here, but it will be expanded to Eagle River, Chugiak and Birchwood. Smaller vehicles will be available so that it will take only 5 people to fill a vehicle. The muni is trying to match up people with similar commuting patterns and suggest this program to them. The cost is about \$100-\$120/month, more than a bus pass but reasonable. Jill asks about insurance issues, and is directed to website (<https://www.muni.org/Departments/Transit/ShareARide>).

Jill notes that the old 102 route that went to U-Med district, and the new (re-numbered as 92) route will not. In theory, more frequent service between downtown and U-med should make transfers more efficient, and the planners estimate that a typical trip on the new route with a transfer to the U-med area should take about the same total time as the old 102 did to get to U-med.

Bobbi asks about the planned schedule from downtown outbound. The draft schedule is that busses will leave from downtown at 3:35, 4:20 (2 busses), 5:15 (2 busses) and 6:10. Bobbi notes that it’s not possible to (for example) attend an assembly meeting. It’s noted that we pay taxes but don’t receive the same service. Colin acknowledges that, but notes that the

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municipality is trying to get the best bang for its transit buck.

Debbie notes that part of the Long Range Transportation Plan is to reduce traffic on the Glenn, and also to add an HOV lane on the Glenn for busses. Did they consider the LRTP? Yes they did; Colin notes that the HOV lane is a long-range issue.

Debbie would like to know more about funding from the state and federal levels. She thought that some of Anchorage's federal funding is determined by our area, with a separate funding unit, because we have a separate Long Range transportation plan. Colin says this is not the case. But the muni is trying to get 5311 funding, designed to promote service in more rural areas. Also there are federal funds for urban transportation that pass through the state. Currently the Alaska RR gets 60% of that funding, and the city would like more, since the railroad doesn't actually provide intra-city or commuting transportation at this time.

Jill says that she was surprised he said 102 ridership was declining, as the busses seem full to her. And that she's been told ridership is calculated by people boarding per mile. That is true; it's a standard measure. They also look at people boarding per hour. We comment that this is a bad metric, because it doesn't account for the rider-miles (which are much higher on the 102 than on downtown routes). Colin acknowledges that this is a good point, and that they are looking for additional metrics.

Colin discusses other route changes (downtown). Gretchen notes that as general advice, people who care about these issues should show up and be involved at the assembly in October during the budget process. Debbie notes that she is most worried about seniors; Colin notes they've been working with the Senior Center.

6. Old Business

- a) BCC by-laws clean-up/changes, vote
- b) Short Plat for Birchwood Loop Subdivision, BCC response
Kevin wrote a letter. He acknowledged the short plat process, noted the importance of maintaining the rural character, and our concerns about water.
- c) Aurora Borealis: Debbie wanted to bring to the council the potential to pass a resolution opposing closure. Debbie understands that if Scott can't get maintenance agreements from all the property owners, closure was a possibility. They would put up a road closed sign, and if no-one plowed it in the winter, it would effectively be closed. Gretchen recalls that the city's concern was liability. There is discussion of the issues, covering the same ground as previous road board reports. ***Gretchen moves that: whereas Aurora Borealis is a historic road for Birchwood, well appreciated, and well used, therefore, the Birchwood Community Council encourages the Road Board to do everything they can to keep Aurora Borealis open. The motion is seconded. It passes unanimously.***

7. New Business (none)

8. Open Forum-floor opened to public, any issue

9. Adjournment- 8:30 pm