

Birchwood Community Council

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Minutes

Wednesday, March 11, 2020, 7-9 PM
Beach Lake Chalet, 17611 S Birchwood Loop Rd

1. Call to Order

2. Approval of Minutes (February – available at meeting) Approved

3. Announcements

- a) Glenn Highway update (Carzilla)
- b). MOA Brownfields Advisory Council is looking for members.
- c) ProStart Culinary mgmt. is looking for donations to go to national competition
- d) the Alaska Division of Forestry has grants available to plant trees – go to their website, ‘What’s New’ and you’ll find more info

Candidates:

Jamie Allard, for Assembly 907-854-5349 jamieallard@icloud.com

4. Reports

- a) FCC Report: Matt Cruickshank AWWU responded to FCC request for better notice – he welcomes help writing a response. Also, insurance coverage now covers our meetings, even if we have to move them or shift the date. Debbie notes that MEA is here, and they are interested in working with communities while developing their long range plans.
- b) CBERRRSA Road Board Report: Mill rate not locked down, we are doing flat funding, so assessments will determine if there’s a change. Matt notes that they’ve cleared their backlog, so now need to develop their CIP. They have not heard anything about funding for Starner Bridge; we have requested money be re-apportioned from the unused portion that was originally targeted at Yosemite Drive, to replace Starner Bridge. To help, send letters of support to your state legislators, especially Senators.
- c) Parks and Recreation Report: <http://www.muni.org/Departments/ERparks/> no report
- d) Chugiak Eagle River Advisory Board no report
- e) Treasurer’s report - \$277
- f) Tim Benningfield – CVFD (CVFRD Annual Report) introduces Madison, who joined 10 months ago as an EMT1, is now an EMT2, attending UAA. She has put in 606 hours since July, and will fight wildland fires this summer. Department annual rpt highlights: more than 1078 calls - 69% EMS related. Some calls don’t fit fire or EMS. More than 61,000 hours from 111 volunteers, which @\$28/hr, is worth about \$1.7 million. They completed their training tower, so now can train locally. They added 9 EMTs, 19 firefighters (certified) . They held annual awards banquet and handed out awards, and elected new officers. There was a question on whether they have protective gear for calls to folks with respiratory problems. CDC says prior recommended gear was overkill. They can use surgical masks as well as N95 masks, and they currently have enough. Test availability improved this week.
- g) Birchwood Patrol Report - no report tonight, Jeff will have a report next month, and will have APD officer with him

2019-2020 board: Debbie Ossiander, Chair & CERAB rep; Gretchen Wehmhoff, Vice Chair and Secretary for Publicity; Lexi Hill, Secretary & Parks and Rec rep; Matt Cruickshank, FCC and Road Board rep; Patty Friend, Member at large; Val Jokela, Treasurer

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- h) Good Cannabis folks introduce themselves – a vertically integrated company looking at options in ER.
- i) Legislative / Assembly reports Kim Collins here for Crystal. Mail-in ballot – make sure you fill in front and back, and it may require 2 stamps. Town Hall has a drop off box. They are due by 8 PM April 7. Crystal does not support the alcohol tax. She wants to encourage everyone to use the library. Also, you can catch Crystal on Facebook.

5. Appearances:

- a) MEA – Julie Estey is here to talk about the upgrade of the Parks Substation. With her is Haileigh Seil and Jon Sinclair of MEA and Van Le of R&M (which is helping MEA with permitting). They started this process back in 2012, did not get CUP needed, primarily because of failure to engage the community. Now they have started again. The Substation is part of stepping down power from transmission lines to household voltage. Power goes out through several feeders. Each substation backs up the ones nearby. For example, in the November 2018 earthquake, when the Pippel substation went down, the Parks Substation picked up the load. The Parks substation was built in the 60s as part of the original extension of power to the area. Matt asks about power rating. It's rated on the distribution side, currently at 5 mVa, going to 20 mVa. The new, larger substation will also provide more reliability. The next closer one is the Reed Substation near Eklutna. There are several in Eagle River. One more new one is permitted for Powder Reserve. Julie knows they had a very poor process last time. To restart, they looked first at what alternative sites might exist. They ID'd feasible possibilities and did site assessments. The big impact from other sites was for re-routing all the feeders. They found that community impact would be much greater for the alternative sites than for current site. There was a question about a possible site near Post Office; or the Circle S property near 3 Bears. There are feeder line problems for the first; Circle S wasn't available at the time that they looked. They did take a quick look when it became available; there was not enough level ground. Matt wonders why they just looked at available lots – they're willing to purchase. Jon Sinclair notes that there are physical limitations on the shape, as well as the square. It needs about 2 acres. Discussions about other possible sites; Julie notes that after looking at the various alternatives, they have come back to this site, and are moving forward with it. Karen asks if there is any way at all it can be down sized. Haileigh Seil describes the current, proposed design. John S responds to question about size. The ring bus arrangement takes space, but provides much better reliability. They have designed it as small as they practically could. The footprint is larger, but the big change is in the height. The towers are 70', and parts of the equipment, 50+ feet. Lighting will be pointed down, and they're required to limit their foot-candles at the boundary line. Low light (security lights) will be always on, but more lights when they are there working. All lights are LEDs that are very directional. Is there noise pollution – the new transformer will be 20 vs 10 mVa, but noise at the boundary will be no more than 60 decibels (a conservative estimate). Question about what the noise level is now. John S thinks it is more than the new one will be, because old equipment is noisy. Question about the tamaracks planned for the buffer– less buffer in winter. Van notes that the landscape architect recommended trees, and the tamaracks don't have roots that interfere with drainage. Also a mix of trees to blend into the neighborhood better. How long from ground breaking to completion? About April – December, but slower in the winter months. John S notes that of that 8 months, folks will hear construction for about 6. Ron asks what the point of our feedback is? Are all decisions made? Debbie notes that it is not a done deal,

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until the CUP is applied for and granted. Our goal here is to get a list of our concerns and issues that we can send to P&Z when they consider the CUP. Karen asks about humming & vibration. John S says the new transformers are more efficient, less vibration, and, like noise, vibration is worse in old transformers. Is there a substation like this? O'Malley and Lake Otis. 70' poles towards O'Malley – it's like this one but with less landscaping. Question on whether they could build Powder Ridge instead of this upgrade – at the distribution level, MEA can't serve the projected load from there. Haileigh notes that they've increased their fence design from 10' to 12', and better material than chain link with slats. In 2013, the tallest poles were 60', and those closer to the residential area were 46'. That has increased to 70' and 51'. Van speaks on drainage and permitting. MEA will need a CUP; substations are permitted, but only if they can meet various conditions, determined by project. A site plan is required. The old project did not take care of the drainage, this time all the drainage will be kept on site. She notes that there's a large table contrasting the old project and this one. Also, this project is under the new title 21; last time was the old one. They anticipate public hearings for design variances as well as CUP. Debbie brings up setbacks. She thinks the placement on the lot puts the most buffer and space, on the side that doesn't need it. There's about 20'-30' buffer on that west side; she thinks it should be 50', even though Title 21 doesn't require it. There's discussion about where on the total (current lot plus Kevin's lot that they are buying) double lot it could be better placed. Question about spills – they will have containment capable of twice the volume of possible spills. Van notes that they haven't applied for the CUP yet; there will be more opportunities for feedback. Karen asks about notices. They are sending postcards to property owners within 3,000 feet of the substation (owners and renters). Once they submit the application to P&Z, they will notice to those within 500'. And there will be postings around the site. MEA will also send out more notice post cards. Debbie notes that she hopes we can list our areas of concern in order to create a resolution for consideration at the April meeting. Another comment on noise – a neighbor does not think 60 db is acceptable, but what's the enforcement if they exceed? John S notes that high efficiency and low noise go hand in hand, and MEA cares about efficiency. Jeff asks about the total cost, and impact on consumers. Cost will be \$11.3 million, and John S says that typically, debt being retired will offset the additional debt resulting from this project, so there will be no net effect on rates. Karen asks for a 3D rendering of the substation as it is, and as it would be, at the same scale.

6. Old Business

- a) Assembly ordinance re: water line
- b) Parks Substation update (see appearances, above)
- c) Carol Creek rezone (comments due 3/16) – Troy Davis homes to put in 153 units of senior housing – one big unit and a bunch of duplexes. Concerns have been density and transportation access.
- d) PFAS and Birchwood Airport (continued from February; probably no report this month) Ken M looked into history, there is no indication of use of PFAS at the airport, the Birchwood Airport Association will discuss at their board meeting.

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7. New Business

- a) Powder Reserve rezone – not covered.

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

Stephanie Jeffers running from assembly; jeffersforalaska.com

Ken McCarty running for state house MccartyforAlaska.com

9. Adjournment-9pm