

# **Birchwood Community Council**

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## **Minutes**

Wednesday, February 12, 2020, 7-9 PM  
Beach Lake Chalet, 17611 S Birchwood Loop Rd

### **1. Call to Order 7 PM**

### **2. Approval of Minutes: January minutes approved**

### **3. Announcements**

- a) There is a potential cannabis store in Eagle River – Good Cannabis is proposing to go in where Mike’s Music and the Pawn shop are. They and we will need to assess if they meet the requirements (they likely do) ; those concerned should contact their assembly member.
- b). Eklutna Valley CC passed a resolution parallel to ours opposing AO-136; CBERRRSA supported us also, but the assembly passed it anyway.
- c) Alaska Division of Forestry is offering grants for planting trees. They are suggesting schools, parks and community areas. PUT THIS ON MARCH AGENDA

### **4. Reports**

- a) FCC Report: Matt Cruickshank Debbie asks about the AWWU response for our request for longer public comment periods, and about AWWU adopting our Comp Plan, The utilities objected strongly to the FCC resolution.
- b) CBERRRSA Road Board Report: after discussing AO-136 they opposed the areawide bond. They also discussed CC’s sending their local area road projects to CBERRRSA for prioritization within CBERRRSA’s work plans. Also, we are about to enter the next 3-year contract for snow plowing – would we rather pay more/have slower response times for plow-outs and not have berms across our driveways; or keep having berms as currently. The sense of those present was to keep our current service.
- c) Parks and Recreation Report: Mirror Lake trails may have some additional development – a bike obstacle area near the parking area. Parks and Rec staff have raised questions about the Compatible lands foundation proposal for an easement in Beach Lake Park; no answers yet. The Parks Board is moving forward with developing a dog park in Peters Creek Park. Matt tells us there are still problems contacting the Mac Center – often no one is up front to answer questions or take money, and the phone often goes unanswered.
- d) Chugiak Eagle River Advisory Board no meeting
- e) Treasurer’s report - \$260
- f) Tim Benningfield – CVFD – no report
- g) Birchwood Patrol Report - no report
- h) Legislative / Assembly reports

### **5. Appearances:**

- a) MEA on Justine Parks substation: The process of trying to expand the substation has re-started; Haileigh is the project manager and Van Le (R&M Consultants) is also involved in the planning. The Parks substation is 45 years old; the equipment has outlived its useful life, and this project will upgrade that equipment. There will be a new transformer (quieter – 60 decibels); and a fence (based on community input – leaning towards trex woodlike material)
- 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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which must be 10' high. Compared to the previous proposal for this site, the buffering has increased. The updated equipment will be more reliable and safer, and provide better redundancy. It's a slightly bigger transformer but still just one. There will be additional switch gear that will let them isolate transmission line faults. It will provide slightly more capacity to back up other substations. Matt asks about the poles feeding power in and out. There will be at least four new taller larger structures (2 inside, 2 outside ) @ 70' to connect substation to power. We recap the issues from the previous attempt to upgrade the substation: process, tall poles, clear cutting, drainage issues. Debbie notes that usually substations like this are on larger lots, not right next to other houses. Van speaks up – her role is to make sure they follow all the permitting requirements. There are 3 muni permitting hurdles: Hurdle 1: a replat to give them a bit more land than the current 2 acres. They need to buy that land (part of the McNamara's lot) to take care of the drainage on-site. They've met with several muni departments on this. Debbie wonders why they don't just buy the whole lot so that they'd have 4.5 acres, instead of just the little bit. The MEA Land Service manager tells us they've been negotiating with the McNamara's to buy the land; it's all contingent on MEA meeting permit requirements. Hurdle 2: a conditional use permit. There will be a public hearing process, the action gets recorded with state recorder's office. The site is zoned residential, and a substation is not a prohibited use. The comp plan says that substations should be bear where they serve. But a CUP will say that all draining must be on site; if it's next to residential, it must be well-buffered (at least 15' all around the property) and this plan will have 30' on the S side.. There will be a 10' fence all around and trees outside that. Hurdle 3: variance process because 6' fence is all that's allowed, but 10' fence is required for a substation. Matt asks if the draining was what stopped the process the last time – that was one issue but not the only one. Lexi asks for an analysis of what's different from the last time and how our concerns from then are being addressed. Debbie notes that she is not sold yet – it seems like almost the same project. Several people suggest that they acquire the McNamara's lot and use the whole thing. Van asks if that is Debbie's main objection - that it was too big on too small a lot. She affirms that it is. One person asks for a pro forma analysis of potential rate effects of other solutions. Mike notes that if MEA is in compliance with all the requirements, he's not sure we can complain. They will be at our March 11<sup>th</sup> meeting:

- b) ASD on school bonds - Elisa Vakalis, and ASD's senior director for capital planning and construction. This will be a single \$82.8 million bond. It will be a 2-year bond, meaning that the District will not bond next year, if this passes. It is mostly towards earthquake recovery. \$42.5 million for Eagle River Elementary and Gruening, all laid out on the flyer. The school district budget situation is tough. They started the year with a \$20 million deficit; they found \$14 million of cuts outside of classroom and \$6 million affecting classrooms. The ASD total budget was about \$10 million less than last year. There are 2 school board seats on April ballot. There was a question on ignite program changes– Elisa explains that it would be re-designed from its current pull-out structure into their What-I-Need time, which is part of classroom time. Some Ignite staff would be retained as instructional coaches. Another question: why aren't we combining Eagle River and Chugiak High Schools and doing a slower repair of Gruening? We discuss the pros and cons of this bond issue's more controversial items.

### 6. Old Business

- a) Revisiting: should we ask assembly to repeal the ordinances directing AWWU to proceed with the (currently dead) transmission line between N Eagle River and CHS? TABLED

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- b) Police and crime in Birchwood: no report, as we were unable to have a no police officer at the meeting
- c) Update on our letter re: AO 165 – covered in FCC rpt

## **7. New Business**

- a) Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) 2040 Update for Anchorage and Chugiak-Eagle River (available for public review and comment)  
We are in the public input period for AMATS. The biggest change in this MTP is that previously there was an (additional, 4<sup>th</sup>) HOV lane proposed for the Glenn Hwy. They removed it in order to free up some funds for mid-town congestion relief. Gretchen would like emphasis on commuter rail; some people would prefer the money go towards H2H; some towards the Glenn; some towards transit. Opinions differ – no motion. Our comments will have more weight if we submit them through Matt C than as individuals. Debbie asks Mike if Eklutna might release their water tests – he will check into it.
- b) A community member is concerned about whether there is a PFAS issue at Birchwood airport, and asks if the council has addressed this. There's no record of whether we have a problem or not. On agenda for March. Someone will reach out to DOT and ask them to be here.

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

Ken McCarty lets us know that the Birchwood airport master plan may be updated – he will fill us in when he knows more.

Also, Ken McCarty is running for House District 13.

## **9. Adjournment-9pm**