

## RUSSIAN JACK COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

6:30 PM, Wednesday, September 9, 2020

At Zion Lutheran Church – 2100 Boniface Parkway

Present: Fred McLeary, Ed Leach, Renea Miller, Kathleen Plunkett, Lisa & Frank McGuire, Dan & Sherry Wright

Meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm by Chair Ed Leach.

### 1. Legislative report

Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson – submitted her report electronically.

Sen. Bill Wielechowski - Elvi did a good job summarizing the things Bill would have been talking about. Bill spoke briefly about CARES Act funding process. Spoke a bit about unemployment and encouraged everyone to complete the 2020 census. Also new COVID-19 testing sites in Anchorage.

Discussion about school openings began, then was postponed to take place under the School Board report. Some discussion of MOA support of ASD was held, about a formula for school funding between the State and the MOA, based on a per student dollar amount.

Sen. Tom Begich (Joshua Spring / Loki Gale Tobin) - no report

Rep. Geran Tarr - improvements to the CARES Act funding processes. Plans for the fall – updating the definition of “consent”, Sept 22 draft language will be reviewed online at 6:30 pm; October 6<sup>th</sup> constituent meeting online at 6 pm with Dr Zink signed up to speak, and they will invite someone from ASD for an update.

Rep. Ivy Spohnholz - submitted an electronic report

Rep. Andy Josephson (Tristan Walsh) – no report

### 2. Assembly report

Pete Petersen - 256 million CARES Act monies – attempting to distribute under several categories. There may still be some \$\$ available for small businesses but the deadline to file is soon. MOA refinanced bond debt and will save 1.2 million for the next 15 years or so. Great time to refinance. Challenging news is a low bed tax revenue, due to lack of tourism, car rental – about \$17 million less than usual. Expected with economic challenges we would have trouble collecting property taxes, but that did not happen. Vast majority is collected by mortgage holders. Properties for the homeless was approved by Assembly and they are assessing the properties for actual market value and any repairs necessary – with lots of property owners interested in this opportunity. Heritage Land Bank was instructed as of last November to search properties. Problems with Treasury concerns about using COVID funding have been addressed. Crime numbers have been down. Police having a regular area to patrol which is having a positive impact locally. Vaping and electronic cigarette taxes are under consideration.

Comments from the public: Glad to see homeless accommodations being dispersed around Anchorage to reduce the concentration. Karluk Manor has been in Fairview for many years, and has not had the concerns being brought up by those in Geneva Woods.

Forrest Dunbar – Alcohol tax goes into effect in February. October – November is when they talk about budget. Solution on Ben Boeke hockey rink - was able to secure some scattered housing so Ben Boeke will be able to go back to its original purpose.

Anchored Home is a plan that was developed to address homelessness in Anchorage. Pay for Success is another model where people are paid back when they can demonstrate progress. Scattered site housing provides a voucher to people so that they can live somewhere, with many people stabilizing once they have housing. Veteran Administration has helped many vets with this program. Often, they are paying a portion of the rent. America's Best Value Inn would provide about 150 rooms. Gap analysis in homeless showed transitional housing as a big part of the need.

Northway Mall is closing many stores. Some have suggested purchasing Northway Mall to use for homeless, but it would not be cost effective with so many changes needed. Roofing issues are another concern with that property. The discussion switched to the stores locally available to many that may need to get there on foot. Geran said that proximity to pharmacy is taken care of by a law that extends that service whether people have a Costco membership or not (for example Carr's pharmacy). There are concerns about Northway Mall being vacant and the impact to the neighborhood. We don't want it to turn into something like Northern Lights Inn did.

3. School board report – Andy Holleman attended the meeting. School has been in session about 4 weeks. This year kids trying to come online – has proven some difficulties for some families. ASD is working with those having issues connecting online to try and get them to attend in person. Down about 4000 students, which will have some financial impacts. Some families may be homeschooling. Some of those will probably come back to ASD once the threat of COVID is passed. Hoping to get athletic program back, when it is safe.

Question came up about Mat Valley schools being open and ASD is not. Many other countries also seem to be opening and not experiencing COVID. The data seems to indicate most children are not at risk of dying of COVID. The regular flu season has a bigger number of deaths and we are not shutting everything down. Do we plan to shut everything down for regular flu season in the future? One public comment is the fact we have a vaccine for regular flu season. The main thing the school wants to do is be careful with the health of the children attending ASD schools. Many parents were worried about opening too soon. Optimism was high in mid-July about school, but the COVID case numbers began to rise in Anchorage. There is a belief that the precautions we have been taking in Alaska are why we have lower numbers.

4. FCC report - James Smallwood – no report

5. Neighborworks Alaska – Lindsey Hajduk spoke about a town hall meeting tomorrow night that to which we can tune in. They provide affordable housing all across Anchorage, including transitional housing. She is community development director, lives in Spenard. They are doing a community impact measurement survey and Lindsey passed out information about it. You can take the survey at: [tinyurl.com/russianjack2020](https://tinyurl.com/russianjack2020) The survey is only for those that reside in the

survey area (map of area is available on the handout). They last did this survey in 2013 and 2017 and a summary of the findings and recommendations were provided. Russian Jack Springs Park Master Plan is one of those items. Lindsey is looking for a few volunteers to help survey that area. Project is in partnership with Neighborworks America. They will bring the information back to the Community Council meetings roughly February/March. Churches in the target area would be a good outreach and may be able to provide help. The request for help can be posted on the Russian Jack Facebook page.

6. Traffic Enforcement concerns in Russian Jack – Ed had a long phone call with a lady on San Roberto who has speeders and stop sign runners in her neighborhood. Are there any unmarked cars watching for traffic violations within neighborhoods? There is a desire for some kind of enforcement of the unsafe drivers within neighborhood roads. We will invite someone from APD that works Russian Jack area to come talk about this for our next meeting.

Ed had a freezer issue and had trouble getting a new one – there is some back log due to COVID manufacturing closures and shipping to Alaska. People looking for a freezer need to look on Tuesday and Thursday. There appears to be a shortage, as perhaps people are loading up for the pandemic.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm

Next meeting will be October 14<sup>th</sup> at Zion Lutheran Church, 2100 Boniface Parkway.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:  
Sherry Wright, Secretary