

# **Birchwood Community Council**

P.O. Box 670984 • Chugiak, AK 99567-0984

[birchwoodcouncil@gmail.com](mailto:birchwoodcouncil@gmail.com)

## **Minutes**

Wednesday, June 10, 2020, 7-9 PM

### **1. Call to Order**

**2. Approval of Minutes (emailed out June 10)** Matt moved, Ken seconded with correction of dates – failed to include ‘May’. Passed as corrected.

### **3. Announcements**

- a) Zoom meeting procedures. Use ‘raise hand’
- b).Debbie paid the PO box, and will get the receipt to Val for payment
- c) good cannabis invitation - forwarded

### **4. Reports**

- a) FCC Report: Matt Cruickshank - no report this month.
- b) CBERRRSA Road Board Report\_CBERRRSA has caught up with their CIP list – they need suggestions of future projects for their local CIP list. It seems unlikely that Starner will get reappropriation as asked. We may want to make Starner Bridge a capital project. Debbie brings questions she’s received: about Helluva street – it was repaired/redone, she was told, for earthquake damage. Does Matt have a list to show what roads will be fixed? In another part of Valley avenue, the cracks are cut out – is that also FEMA dollars? Debbie will tell the questioner to call the Road Board – Matt can provide a list of projects.
- c) Parks and Recreation Report: <http://www.muni.org/Departments/ERparks/> No meetings since Feb – one planned for later this month – Lexi will send out results.
- d) Chugiak Eagle River Advisory Board – No report
- e) Treasurer’s report - \$277
- f) Tim Benningfield – CVFD (CVFRD Annual Report) – no report
- g) Birchwood Patrol Report: Matt has not seen anything listed specifically, but there is some crime activity on Birchwood Loop. Ken notes that about 10 days ago, a truck was stolen from Birchwood airport. There are some suspects. At the airport they are looking at security
- h) Legislative / Assembly reports
- i) Bearpaw – Gretchen – Bear Paw is postponed. Ken talked to Debbie Renke; they have looked at other locations (Lions Park); Hickel did not want any of it on their property, but the Chamber is trying. Crystal notes that it’s been a bit back and forth. The Chamber wants to do something – probably smaller – and businesses are interested. Due to lack of communication, the Muni is saying that the Chamber has canceled, but chamber is waiting on guidance from Muni to hold the event. KTUU reported tonight, that the Muni as working closely with the chamber to choose a date. Jamie Allard and Crystal are working with the Muni to make a decision. She suggests that people stay tuned – something should be decided by the end of this week. Ken asks about the Chugiak 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade. Is it cancelled as well? Crystal doesn’t not know. Debbie will ask.

### **5. Appearances:**

- a) None scheduled

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

# Birchwood Community Council

## 6. Old Business

- a) MEA Justine Parks Substation – recap of P&Z meeting. 7 or 8 people testified on the plan that MEA presented at our (March) meeting. There was a mixed reaction from the commissioners, with a suggestion to vote no, but also hesitation to do that because MEA worked better with the community this time, and the project is needed. P&Z postponed the decision and asked MEA to look again, reach out to the community again to lessen the impact. The Commissioners believed that attention had been paid to sound, light, drainage, but that it's a large project for a rural residential neighborhood. Debbie asks what Julie Estey is thinking. Julie has heard the same things, and she's grateful for the chance to reengage. They need to upgrade, but based on comments, footprint and buffering were the big issues. They've asked engineers to work on a smaller footprint or better buffering. The trade-off is either higher cost or lower reliability. They would like to bring back changed plans to us, but also work with most affected homeowners. Debbie asks for questions, and there is a discussion about MEA's transparency and outreach efforts, as well as the same issues raised and (the community feels) not addressed. Julie notes that they want to give the full picture when they come back to us. That will likely be a few months, but they're pushing their engineering team. Haileigh (project manager) thinks they will know a timeline within the next month. Debbie also noted that if the Chair of P&Z ended public testimony, it will be difficult for the council to actively participate. Julie would encourage more public testimony and would support us in testimony being re-opened if that's needed. Matt notes that he appreciates that all options are on the table, and he hopes the conversation can still include other sites, and that other sites can still be considered.
- b) Julie notes that they'll be doing clearing in the area from the Reed substation (near the power plant) into the Birchwood area, and will send info that we can send out. They have finished their 7-year clearing cycle, and have started around again. Those affected will get an autocall, then a postcard a week before clearing; a door hanger a few days before. If there's a tree they want saved, individuals should contact MEA and they'll see what they can do. A day or two before, MEA will tape the trees – that is the last chance to affect the clearing. Hopefully people will ensure that things that could be a problem (like dogs in the ROW) won't be there.

## 7. New Business

- a)

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

Crystal – there will be discussion about where alcohol tax money will go. It doesn't kick in until next year. There will be a town hall at some point, but let her know if you have an opinion. CARES Act funding: the Muni has received about 119 MM of the state funding; we need to spend 80% of it before any more is released. There is interest in expanding business grants, as that money went quickly, as well as rent and mortgage assistance programs. There's interest in work programs, including potential fire mitigation teams. The other big ticket item is day care – how to provide safe day care, and how can we promote that for people who need day care to go back to work. She would like to hear from our community. Budget season for 2021 budget will start soon. There is a lot of desire for community conversation around police reform issues. For lower Fire Lake, there is

## Birchwood Community Council

concern about too much traffic on the lake, and shoreline erosion; ERCC will be discussing this. Matt asks if the Muni and assembly has been putting together regulations around policies for reopening of schools. Has Crystal heard anything about a committee to do this? Crystal has not, but she thinks the health department and school district are working on this together. Jamie Allard adds that she hasn't received any emails about this (although she has kids in the district). She is hoping that she will learn something soon. She did want to note that we have non-profits that are looking for help. If people are aware of businesses, non-profits looking for help, have them reach out to Crystal and Jamie. Also, if people see RVs camping out for longer than they should, let her know. Matt has heard about moving homeless shelter away from industrial zoning to other zones. Jamie has heard that we are keeping people moving, and then they have to figure out where they land – jail, services, ...she is working with the 3<sup>rd</sup> street radicals group to try to get the homeless off the street. She notes some Juneau success. Crystal thinks Matt is asking about the ordinance change, with which she's only a bit familiar. John Weddleton's idea was to have more zoned areas that would allow shelters, so they didn't end up in zones where they aren't supposed to be. It will be a balancing act between everywhere being eligible, but making it less restrictive so community organizations like churches that want to help, can. Debbie thinks that John's ordinance allows shelters in mixed use districts, but mixed districts were intended to allow residences and stores. She is concerned and wants to weigh in once she sees the ordinance.

Ken M notes Fire Lake signage issues – one sign says only a 10 hp motor on fire like, and another sign says no more than 50 hp. Signage is confusing.

At Birchwood airport they have a pilot's planning center – bathrooms and a place for them to plan their next flight. The toilet overflows, the airport association has put in cash and cleaning and would appreciate assistance from the Muni for a new carpet – it's hygiene related, and covid-related.

Debbie also asks if there's any hope of covid aid to offset the increased property tax resulting from the state decision to not pay on school bonds. Crystal says the muni has asked, so far the answer is now, but she will keep asking., She would like to see the taxpayers' burden lightened. Jamie spoke to Sen. Sullivan's office – there is a fine line about doing it, but they are not totally opposed. It can't be used to backfill lost revenue, or it will not fly, but they are working on other approaches.

Summer Hiatus – Debbie would like to hold off meeting until September, unless MEA requests an earlier meeting. We deal with the road issues (below) and move back to summer hiatus. Debbie moves that we skip July and August meetings, unless a pressing issue (especially MEA) arises that necessitates meeting sooner. Motion passes.

Matt asks about CIP projects. Debbie asks for suggestions: Artillery road interchange, and Starner Bridge. Debbie asks about cracks in roads – does the road board have that covered? They do – areawide drainage and asphalt restoration are on the list. So crack repair is on the list. Lexi asks about Artillery Road – we are a year out from results on actual work beyond earthquake repair. But we should deal with the congestion and merging at that interchange. Ken brings up Pilot Road – since the earthquake that needs repair. Matt notes that earthquake damage will bring FEMA dollars and he will follow up. Patty Friend moves that we support Artillery Road, Starner Bridge, drainage issues and crack repair as our preferred capital improvement priorities. Ken seconds. Karen asks what the proposal is for Starner Bridge, especially as there is no maintenance along that road. What

## **Birchwood Community Council**

is the issue? Debbie notes that it's not safe – it has structural damage to it. This would be replacement at the same level. But stronger so that fire trucks could cross.  
No objections to the motion –it passes unanimously.

Crystal asks about the areawide bond for life/safety access road. If did pass areawide, and money is available for the project we identified, but we could change to another project. She asks Matt what input CBERRRSA might want to have in this process. Gretchen asks if this could be used for Starner Bridge? Jamie wonders if that would set a bad precedent because we were against it the bond issue. Crystal notes that the motivation behind the project is for roads to be connected so people would have multiple ways in and out of neighborhoods. Lexi asks if there was a reason for Kullberg over Starner - it was just a placeholder. Matt notes that it's just money for design. Debbie notes that the vote was subject to a recount and was very close. She suggests that Matt talk to the Chugiak Fire Chief about what roads are problematic for access. Crystal comments that she talked to Mark Littlefield and Tim Benningfield, and they had identified several roads they thought fit the criteria, and ended with Kullberg, because residents have had problems for years. Debbie thinks it's bad precedent to put a bridge (Starner) on our local CIP list, because the state do bridges, not the Muni.

### **9. Adjournment-9pm 8:27**