

NECC

Northeast Community Council General Meeting Minutes September 17, 2020

Call to order: 7:00

(27 people on as of 7:06; grew to 34 people a few minutes later)

- Donna moves to approve agenda, with two amendments; Rick seconds
 - Change: Add Jaime Allard from the Assembly – welcome
 - New business: Add roller rink rezone
 - No objections; agenda is approved

Board Introductions

- Rachel, Donna, Selena, Charles, Liz, Rick, (Bob)
- Board update: Kyle Stevens has been appointed to the empty board seat

FCC Update from Bob

- Met yesterday (9/16) by Zoom
- Have 1000 masks available to the public, if anyone is interested
- Passed a budget of \$90,000
- Has made Zoom available for all community councils, and there is \$75 available to all councils for mailings
- Mayor presentation: State of Alaska has \$156 million for small businesses and childcare; upset that the city is picking up the school bond debt; homeless housing is in the works and moving forward; overall crime has gone down, except for sexual assault and vandalism

Community Concerns

- Monique and Reggie
 - Property sinking and wet lands
 - East 20th and Rebel Ridge; and issues expand beyond this immediate vicinity
 - Water and flooding has been getting worse over time
 - Her utility easement is constantly sinking
 - To fix this will cost her \$4-5,000
 - Confirmed that it is her responsibility to fix it, and advised to bring it to NECC
 - John at code enforcement is the one who said it's her responsibility
 - She has two sump pumps going to avoid home flooding; home insurance will not cover it
 - Since the 2018 earthquake, their homes have sunk 4 inches or more, and water issues have worsened
 - Her home was built in the 1980s

- Would like the city to address storm drainage issues for those who are burdened through no fault of their own; and curious if this issue has come up before
 - Selena noted that this type of trouble has happened in the past
 - Donna – storm drainage is not supposed to run into other people’s property; the Assembly is working on the establishment of a stormwater utility; encouraged Monique to contact her privately to move forward with municipal resources
 - Forrest – please contact him for assistance in moving forward; there is admittedly no Muni avenue to address this right now, but this is part of the purpose of the stormwater utility (but this is probably a few years out)
- Donna
 - Highlighting that the census is important and we need more people to complete it. Please contact Donna for a yard sign.
 - Selena noted that the census will be done by Sep. 26, but people can still go online to complete it

Candidate Introductions and Ballot Measure Overviews

District 16

- Rep. Ivy Spohnholz: born in rural Alaska; has been representing her district for the past 4 years; passed the price transparency bill; fought for the telehealth bill; fighting for education; worked on two bills to respond to the pandemic (access to support and limit evictions)

District 27

- Liz Snyder: Liz, married to Sam and has two young boys; lived on the Eastside for 10 years; public health professional. (Minimal notes taken as Liz is also the NECC secretary. Please see recording.)
- Rep. Pruitt: Been the rep for 10 years; most of the roads in the area have gotten rejuvenation; voted against SB 91; huge convergence of things coming this year; need to be careful about spending; can’t be everything to everyone; neither he nor his opponent are medical doctors.

District 15

- Lyn Franks: We have some of the lowest voter turnout in the state; will bring a realistic perspective to meeting the needs of Alaska; the virus and the budget cuts have devastated; if Prop 1 passes, we will have the resources we need to meet state needs; what if far right candidates are elected – what will happen to Alaska?
- David Nelson: Used to give briefs on the safety patrol, but now he is running for HD 15; has been dealing with COVID-19 response across the state; has served as a leader for the NE community council community patrol; has been out door knocking and talking to voters; wants to make sure that new taxes are put before a vote of the people; wants a spending cap; and wants people to feel safe out on the streets at night.

District H

- Sen. Wielechowski: used to serve on the board of NECC; moved on to the zoning and planning commission; and then got elected to the state Senate; worked hard on Eastside development – roads, public safety patrols, helped start the farmers market, advocated for two new fire stations. We're in a tough budget crisis – we need to fix our oil tax structure. We used to have a fair oil tax structure, and we need to fix it. We are just about broke because our tax structure is broken. It has been an honor to serve you.

District N

- Carl Johnson: Navy veteran; came to Alaska for the practice of law; also has worked as a natural resource manager and educator, but is now a small business owner. Throughout his career he's worked in public service. He has a desire to serve in the public interest, and to get the maximum benefit from our resources. We can't grow our economy unless we have an educated citizenry.
- Care Clift: A 40 year Alaskan; she is a teacher, a grandmother, and a mother. Was a teacher at Chester Valley Elementary. Socially liberal, and fiscally conservative. She is an independent. Has many ideas on how to improve education in this state. Would love to be able to apply her skills at the state level. Has a Masters degree in reading. Has lived for several years in rural Alaska. Believes kids need to go back to school. Will vote to restore the dividend. Would like to see due process in family court. Supports sustainable resource development, protection of all rights. Vote for Care Clift for someone truly different.

Ballot Measure 1

- Rick Philipps (Yes on 1): Fair Share Initiative – to share the tax structure on the three largest oil fields; would bring in about \$1 billion a year; it won't completely fix the budget, but it will be a big help. Brings additional transparency with respect to what the oil companies make and spend. Before SB 21 passed, the state brought in about 19 billion over 5 years. After it passed, the state lost about 19 billion dollars. The latest opposition commercial says Yes on 1 is funded by outside sources, but it's false. And in fact, the No on 1 side gets most of their money from outside.
- Donna: Invited a rep from No on 1 (One Alaska), but they couldn't make it. Sent a video to be shared. (Donna played it. See recording of meeting.)

Ballot Measure 2

- Bret Hubersr (No on 2): We have a tried and true election system. Not sure what Yes on 2 is trying to fix. We have a pretty good idea why people run for office, and how and why we support who we support. Ballot Measure 2 is a 25 page document, and is supported by out of state money. It says it will get outside dark money out of the equation, but it won't be successful. The measure also addresses primaries and rank choice voting. Rank choice voting throws out the one vote per one Alaskan approach, and relies on a computer to calculate rank choice outcomes.

- Shea Siegert (Yes on 2): The measure takes us from our two party closed primary to one open primary that all voters can participate in. We have a large portion of the Alaska population that doesn't identify as Democrat or Republican, and they are disenfranchised from primaries. We want politicians to vote across party lines, but we don't let our voters vote across party lines. And petition candidates don't get to show up on the primary ballot. The open primary has been proven to improve representation. There is no rank choice voting in the non-partisan primary. In the general primary, it moves to rank choice. It's not confusing like opponents claim. Maine uses it, and Mainers aren't confused. Places that have repealed it, are places that it was repealed a really long time ago. In terms of the third pillar – it outlaws dark money. Donors have to put their names behind their donations. Right now, funders can donate to shell groups, and then shell groups donate to a campaign – hiding where the money actually came from. The actual donors to the Yes on 2 campaign have put their names behind it in an effort of transparency.

Legislative Reports

- Sen. Wielechowski:
 - Big issues right now:
 - Census. You can do it online; you can do in by paper. Each person who fills it out can bring in \$40,000 to the state.
 - Pandemic benefits through EBT – families are entitled to \$400 per child.
 - Absentee ballots – can apply online; very quick. You can also do early voting to avoid lines.
- Rep. LeDeoux: Not present
- Rep. Spohnholz:
 - AK CARES small business and non-profit relief program – it's been a bit of a debacle; it's had to be expanded; had about \$290 million in applications, and tens of millions of more applications have been made; we are down over 40,000 jobs this summer over last summer.
 - We lost the wage replacement money to Alaskans (\$600/week expired in July); the governor has taken advantage of a federal program to provide \$300/week for a short time. We need to encourage the federal government to pass another stimulus bill. It's passed the house, but we need the US senate to take it up.
- Rep. Pruitt:
 - There are a lot of AK CARES Act issues that they're working on. People figuring out how to apply for AK CARES Act funding. Been working on unemployment issues – people are really concerned about the changes that have been made. Some folks were eligible, and now they're not – trying to help. His team has been busy trying to help.

Assembly Reports

- Assemblyman Dunbar:
 - The small business grant program is already oversubscribed (just like the state). Anchorage made a very sizable investment in rental and mortgage assistance, and it's helped more than 3000 families stay in their homes. More families are on the

- edge, and we've kept them from becoming homeless. If you know someone who is struggling, have them call 211. It's a program administered by United Way.
- They are taking comments on an ordinance that would take away certain fees for the taxi industry, to help in these challenging times. They haven't passed the ordinance, but hope to pass it later this month.
 - Question: Thankful to hear that rental/mortgage assistance is still available. Is there a specific topic for access to the assistance information when you call into 211. Answer: When you call, ask for help with rental/mortgage assistance. If you have any trouble, email Dunbar directly.
 - Question: Is the rental assistance paid to the landlord or to the tenant. Answer: Believes it's to the landlord, but needs to double check as it's been a while since that ordinance was passed.
 - Assemblywoman Allard:
 - Encourages folks to come and testify at the Assembly meetings. (Connection to Zoom was not good.) When the community participates, the Assembly has a better feel for how they should work and what they should work on. Dunbar pretty much covered everything else.
 - Assemblyman Peterson:
 - It's on the next agenda to tax vaping products in the same way that other tobacco products are taxed.
 - Dunbar elaborated: It was co-sponsored by LaFrance and Constant. Right now there is one rate for cigarettes, one rate for things like chew, and vaping products have no tax. This ordinance would remove the exemption from being taxed. Originally, they weren't taxed because the original thought was that vaping would help people stop smoking, but that's not how it's turned out.

Community Updates:

- Andy Holleman (School Board Update)
 - Insurance for school buildings was going to cost 10% of the building every year, and this insurance was required by FEMA. Made the argument to FEMA to waive this requirement and still be eligible for support from earthquake damage. Repair from the 2018 earthquake is ongoing, and working to get as much federal support as possible.
 - Have announced dates for schools reopening – but they are contingent on COVID-19 cases not greatly worsening in the meantime. They've been getting a lot of feedback on the plan from across the opinion spectrum. Please share your feedback, too.
 - A request has been made to rename East High after Betty Davis. To address this proposal, the community has to be involved. The pandemic has derailed efforts at community engagement, but it's still on the table.
 - Question: Why aren't students starting going back to school for just a few days – like use Wednesday for cleaning. Answer: Data doesn't seem to support this being helpful, and going back to school part time still seems to upset schedules. Cleanings will happen at night.

Presentations

- 2020 Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program (Tim Myland)
 - Two projects coming up in our neck of the woods, which could be completed next summer.
 - The battery-powered radar speed signs at Beaver Place have been there for a while, and they are about ready to move forward on next steps. Now it will be permanent speed radar signs that are hooked into the electrical grid. Collected data show that the radar signs significantly reduce car speed.
 - Cherry Street has also been selected. School safety money will be leveraged to address the issue there. Traffic calming measures will take place on East 6th Ave.
 - Donna advocated for behavior change efforts to adjust traffic patterns.
 - Karen has property on Beaver, and is horrified by the amount of traffic on that street. The traffic study was done in the summer, and thus doesn't account for school traffic.
 - Tim: It's high, because the next connector is Patterson and it doesn't go through to Debarr. Might cost something like \$10 million to put it through.
 - Comment: One attraction there is the lake itself, and the fact that it's stocked.

New Business

- Roller Rink: Rezoning application to P&Z said no. Now they are approaching the Assembly. The Assembly requested that the NECC address this issue and pass a resolution. We can't address this on tonight's meeting given its late addition. Could be addressed in a special subcommittee session (a week from today – 9/24), or it could be addressed next month.
 - Dunbar: P&Z said it wants the area to be reserved for housing. The applicant wants to rezone and turn it into a storage yard. But, if the Assembly says yes to rezoning, then the applicant can turn it into anything. The applicant says he's only interested in a storage yard, as that's his business. It's possible that the Assembly could put special limitations on the rezone.
 - Planning and Zoning said they only want housing.
 - No work sessions on this topic have been scheduled yet.

Old Business

- Tamas is inviting the community to a public hearing. The plan will ultimately be forwarded to the Assembly. The development will include a Starbucks, as well as a childcare facility (likely). This is Tamas's third time attending council and making presentations and addressing questions and concerns.
 - Tamas would like a resolution of support a lot. It is a benefit to a project to have a supportive resolution, but without it, they are able to move forward because they are meeting process requirements.
 - Rachel: We have a resolution written up and it can be put up for a vote.

- Motion was made and seconded. Discussion followed:
 - Donna: It's a bummer to have the backside of a drive-through along a major intersection.
 - Comment: Is there any opportunity for community youth to be involved with the project? Ways to involve them at the grassroots level – site development, surveying, etc. Please consider mentoring opportunities.
 - Reggie: How did Starbucks end up being part of the plan? Answer: The developers did a market analysis to assess demand.
 - Selena: So, they're planning on opening up a standalone Starbucks across the street from Fred Meyer, which also has a Starbucks.
 - 9 yes, 5 no, 2 abstentions – Motion passes

- Board Elections

- Voting on Stu, Kyle, and Rick
- 11 Stu, 10 Kyle, 11 Rick, 1 abstained
- Stu, Kyle, and Rick continue as board members

No committee updates

- Robin praised the Chanshtnu Phase 2 project. Fencing will be done Summer 2021. Dog parks 2022.

Adjourned at 9:34pm