

Birchwood Community Council

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Minutes

Wednesday, February 10, 2021, 7-9 PM

1. Call to Order 7:01

2. Approval of Minutes January - approved

3. Announcements

- a) Zoom meeting procedures.
- b) ..
- c)

4. Reports

- a) FCC Report: Matt Cruickshank: Susan has a raise – she gives a lot. FCC hopes to get more notice out of the ccs for distribution of information
- b) CBERRRSA Road Board Report:
Birchwood Loop: DoT is testing having CBERRRSA maintain Birchwood Loop – we'll get a 14-hour plow-out rather than 30+. **CIP projects** – they have about a million on the table that they have not designated. They had asked for an audit of per lane mile of funding by community council. Chugiak is first, we are last. Matt thinks Chugiak will push for the work on back side of Oberg. Should we save for a future year or spend on Oberg. Also, it's not that Chugiak is against Starner bridge, but more that they want other funds used for that. Lexi suggests we study what many have described as a problem – the Chugiak HS intersections. Lexi moves that **BCC requests that the Road Board study how to mitigate the horrible traffic situation around Chugiak High School. Patty Friend seconds, no opposition, the motion passes.**
- c) Parks and Recreation Report
There is a cemetery site selection report; options include both park lands and Eklutna lands. Will Taygan brought to the Parks Board's attention that the new AMATS trail plan update has incorrect information about what exists, and has done away with many of the suggested trail connections in the plan that this is supposed to update. The Parks Board is moving forward with plans to establish a dog park, most likely in a little-used part of Peters Creek Park. There will be a public meeting soliciting feedback.
- d) Chugiak Eagle River Advisory Board:
Debbie thanks Patty Friend who is doing some organizing of the Board, and giving Debbie energy to keep going. Only one Title 21 issue currently under discussion (homeless shelters) which doesn't affect ER.
- e) Treasurer's report no change.
- f) Tim Benningfield – CVFD - no report
- g) Birchwood Patrol Report no report
- h) Legislative / Assembly reports:
Tiffany with Ken McCarty's office: repkenmccarty.com is their website with lots of information. You can join his mailing list from there. They have sent a survey to businesses in Eagle River/Chugiak on how COVID-19 has affected them – she asks for emails of businesspeople who didn't get one. He has one bill pre-filed to give a waiver to military children to help kids transition into schools; also the trade school concurrent enrollment issue mentioned last month.

2020-2021 board: Debbie Ossiander, Chair; Matt Cruickshank, Vice Chair, FCC and Road Board rep; Gretchen Wehmhoff: Secretary for Publicity; Lexi Hill, Secretary & Parks and Rec rep; Patty Friend, Member at large; Val Jokela, Treasurer

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Crystal Kennedy, Assembly: Feb 9 meeting had several hot topic items. 1) Meg Zalatel's attempt to find a way to censure Jamie Allard. The resolution was postponed indefinitely by unanimous consent. Crystal did not want to see the Assembly be able to send breach of public trust items to the ethics commission, which they can't handle. Breach of public trust does need to be better defined by the ethics commission, so the public can express their concerns. 2) There was a proposal to turn the mask mandate from an emergency order to a temporary ordinance. There were reasons to do that, but also many problematic issues. Crystal would like to see us get out from under emergency orders and deal differently with the issues the administration said made the EO necessary (moving employees, bid processes). That was also postponed indefinitely. There are other issues they did not get to that will come up at the Feb 23rd meeting, but they, too, are likely to be postponed because they don't get to the central issue.

Fund Balance: we had \$22 million in fund balance, which sounds like a lot, but is a bit misleading. We used Cares Act funds to offset first responder payroll which freed up our general funds, and also took the pressure off the Dec 2020 deadline for spending those Cares Act funds. So much of the money in fund balance is already supposed to go out to the public in relief funds. Matt asks about CBERRRSA fund balance; Crystal reminds us that CBERRRSA fund balance is not part of Muni fund balance. Debbie asks if the process that encumbers some of fund balance to keep bond rating up is still in place.

Spring election: we will elect mayor, school board seats, and several ballot propositions. Those propositions are an extra tax for police body cameras and technology; the Chugiak/Eagle River Senior Center is asking for \$350,000 to finish their construction project.

Police Chief Justin Doll is retiring in June (moving to San Jose). Felix Rivera brought up the question of whether people wanted there to be a more public process of choice for Police Chief. Crystal emphasizes that no decisions have been made, but she is soliciting people's opinions. We do have a public process around school superintendent, so this is an interesting idea. Kim Collins is working with her about the processes around how board and commission members are chosen, approved.

Deena Mitchell: K-2 went back Jan 19; that has been going well, although a few classrooms are closed due to COVID-19 cases. As of this last Monday, all elementary kids are back in school; teachers have been moved up in the priority list for vaccines. They are having 'visit our schools' month, but it will be virtual. The best way to find out timing is to call the school you're interested in. This is open to all community members. Also, Kindergarten (countback) is happening to plan for next year's kindergarten, and registration for school choice lotteries is ongoing. There is no school bond on the ballot this year because last year's 2-year bond did pass. They are working on the budget, and relief funds (ESSER 2) from the federal government are letting them not cut programs or increase class sizes. They are also keeping teachers who would have been laid off due to the dip in enrollment. ASD is planning robust summer programs to help make up for COVID-19 learning losses. Another exciting thing is the vaccine clinic at the administration building that has gone remarkably well. Secondary students will be back in classrooms March 15, after Spring break. High Schools are planning on in-person, outdoor graduations this year. Debbie asks if there's public notice of which schools have COVID-19 shutdowns? It's on the main webpage.

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5. Appearances:

- a) Denny Hostetter, Public affairs at JBER

The two most important contacts for JBER are jber.pa@us.af.mil and 552-8609 (which is conservation law enforcement). A few weeks ago, law enforcement issued citations to folks on JBER who were fishing without license or did not sign in to isportsman.net. The isportsman.net website is the way we can legally sign on and access JBER for recreation. If people can't navigate the website, call the phone # above. One priority that they would like to add is maintaining access points onto JBER. If people have questions about access, they should use the phone or email above.

- b) Tom Loomey, presentation on Cemetery Site Selection committee

Tom notes that Birchwood doesn't have a really active representative on the committee right now, and they would welcome another member. The Boutet Company (TBC) put together an inventory of HLB, park, and Eklutna properties that might fit the necessary criteria. He presents the sites. 5 Anchorage-owned sites narrowed down to two – A2 and A5; 8 Eklutna-owned sites narrowed down to two – E4 and E5.

A2 is Yosemite Drive (across from Eagle River HS, S of the prison). It is flat enough, and usable for a cemetery. It does overlap with some running/ski trails, but as currently sketched, they would not be affected until phase 3, many years out. Access is fairly easy, there is power nearby. A5 is in Mirror/Edmonds Lake Park. There is real development there now, and access would have to be built. Eklutna is working with Parks and Rec for access across the park in that area to their land, so that may solve some access problems. There is enough land to serve the community for a long time. But the cost of development would be higher than A2 and affects ski trails as well. E4 is by Knik Vista – it has the best views. There are a number of residential streets that could be extended for access. The impact on the community would have to be considered. This is an area with more steep slopes. There might be areas for 'green burials' in E4. He doesn't know that Eklutna would want to sell this for a cemetery because it might be more valuable for housing. E5 is also near Mirror Lake MS; there may be a way to access it without huge expense. While it would be fine for a cemetery, it might also be higher value for housing. The next step is to gather public input. At some point we have to choose one of these sites and get ready to promote a bond for development. Debbie thinks the committee could choose and get public input on that. Most of the committee thinks that A2 is the best choice, and he notes that A5 is over a lot of trails. It's the preference of the Muni to go through a public process. Eventually, he wants community councils to weigh in, and hopefully all on one property. Matt asks who is on the committee. Tom lists the members. Matt asks any Anchorage parcel under consideration needs to be on the annual work program of HLB before they could let it go for a cemetery? Debbie is not sure if it has to be, although it should be. Crystal has been working with Robin Ward (HLB) on some of these issues. She notes that the cemetery is already in HLB's real estate plan. One last note: we will have to determine who would operate the cemetery. The downtown cemetery is run by the Municipal HHS department; Girdwood is planning on that and hopefully we could too.

- c) Candidates: Sami Graham – candidate for school board seat E, used to live in Eagle Ridge. Samigraham.com
Elisa Vakalis: candidate for 3rd term, seat G. Bartlett HS grad. Elisa.vakalis@gmail.com

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Alisha Hilde, running for re-election to seat E school board. Alishahilde.com
Carl Jacobs, running for seat G school board. www.carl4anchorage.com

6. Old Business

- a) Cemetery site selection (see appearances, above)
- b) Birchwood Airport Master Plan – update
Their meeting was yesterday. They need to update the master plan to get any more FAA funding for improvements. The goal is to consider how can the airport best serve the needs of the flying public and a lot of other stakeholders. Those include the Birchwood pilot's assoc. Civil Air Patrol, Eklutna Village, DOT&PF, the Alaska RR (who missed the meeting), and the Birchwood Shooting Park. The planned schedule: Last summer planners collected data; there will be 3 stakeholder meetings and 2-3 public meetings; the first will be March 4. They will hold 2 shorter meetings - 5-6:30, and 6:45 – 8:15. There will be a flyer, which Val will send. The next stakeholder meeting will be in the July-September time frame. Birchwood needs an alternate representative. Val is trying to focus on what would affect our community. There was some talk in last summer's data collection of perhaps expanding the airport and having more commercial operations. Most of the stakeholders were not interested in that, and Val spoke for us that the community would likely not support expansion into commercial operations with larger planes and more traffic. There's a taxiway and gravel strip that are aligned with each other and they should not be – the taxiway needs to be moved to the east but there is nowhere to move it. One idea was to straighten and move RR tracks to make land available to move the taxiway. She brought up Crystal's concerns about jurisdiction; it was a concern to the broader group as well. One hanger owner has paid high taxes to the municipality, but then has to pay lease money to the state. So this is an issue of broad concern. Matt suggests he could be the alternate, and he is approved by acclamation
- c) Proposed Title 17 changes – update: Val summarizes the issues– the next meeting of the Title 17 group is Feb 11. They will be looking at comments and will likely go back to committee. When we get closer to a concrete proposal, we will want to consider a resolution.
- d) Road Board alternate – Debbie asks for suggestions. Matt suggests Val, and she is approved by acclamation.

7. New Business (none)

- a)

8. Open Forum-floor opened to public, any issue (nothing)

9. Adjournment-8:54pm