

Birchwood Community Council
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MINUTES
BIRCHWOOD Community Council
Wednesday, September 14, 2022, 7-9 PM

1. Call to Order: 7:10 PM by Debbie Ossiander

2. Approval of May Minutes: postponed because of no paper copies of minutes or agenda

3. Announcements:

a) **Call to Action** to purchase OWL Camera/Speakers to hold hybrid meetings: We initiated a fundraiser at our May 12 meeting. Status of funds raised to date: \$500.00/\$1000.00 needed. We have not earmarked funds, yet from our treasury. We have \$252.00 available and would recommend contributing \$100.00 and hold back the rest for incidental expenses like our PO Box. The fee for the box went from \$95.00 to \$100.00 this year. FCC pays yearly \$75.00. FCC refunded our Treasurer and our treasury reimbursed our Treasurer \$25.00. Plan is to purchase it and have it for our October meeting. Discussion over cash or checks. Donation can be given to Matt or Debbie to be passed to the treasurer or sent to the BCC post office box. This was tabled to October 12 meeting for discussion.

b) Hybrid meetings: member preference to hold either at Birchwood Elementary School Auditorium or Eagle River Library Conference Room-motion approved

c) Liquor store license renewals-there were no comments or objections to local liquor license renewals

d) JBER announcements: Joy was not in attendance probably because of the malfunction of the zoom address

e) Return to Salmon Relay September 18-Eklutna Matt will represent BCC hand-carrying salmon to the Eklutna River

4. Reports

2021-2022 board: Debbie Ossiander, Co-Chair; Matt Cruickshank, Co- Chair, Road Board rep;
Gretchen Wehmhoff: Secretary for Publicity, FCC Rep; Barbara Trost, Parks and Rec rep;
Patty Friend, Member at large; Val Jokela, Secretary-Treasurer

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a) FCC Report: Gretchen Wehmhoff: no report

b) CBERRRSA Road Board Report: Matt Cruickshank: Starner bridge had a state grant for \$1.3M in the FY22 budget, as noted by Representative Kelly Merrick. Then another one of our representatives went to the Governor and requested to veto the bridge. CBERRSA board had voted to spend \$1B from its road maintenance reserve fund to supplement state funding. The bridge and Aurora Borealis are two different but related issues, and the board had also approved spending \$250 to do surveying and possibly acquire rights-of-way along Aurora Borealis to resolve road issues.

c) Parks and Recreation Report: Barbara Trost: no report

d) Chugiak Eagle River Advisory Board: Debbie Ossiander we meet when issues come up

e) Treasurer's report: Val Jokela \$252.00

f) CVFD: Acting Fire Chief John Della Crose- gave a brief report on the department's membership and activities: there are 99 volunteer members who put in 4800 hours of service in the prior year. The department conducted 87 responses in August putting the department on track for as many as 1200 total responses. The department is working to replace 2 pieces of equipment-a fire engine and rescue truck and Station 31's kitchen was undergoing remodeling. 30 students were in attendance at the meeting and Della Crose described opportunities for young people aged 14 and over to train in the CFVRD's junior program with the opportunity to accompany other volunteers on service runs.

g) Birchwood Patrol Report: Several thefts along Birchwood Loop. Increased police presence and that has mitigated the thefts. Increased drug activity at park and ride by high school.

h) Birchwood Airport Master Plan: Val Jokela Future stakeholder meeting dates are unknown at this time. There were supposed be scheduled stakeholder and public meetings summer 2022 and no action.

i) Legislative / Assembly reports:

Kelly Merrick: Starner Bridge was not a reappropriation, but from general funds FY22, participated in Fire Ops1, meet with Mark Littlefield looking over Capital Budget. PFD September 20. Register to vote at age 18. November 8 election, absentee ballots must be requested by October 29. Took campaign signs down, very expensive, lots of vandalism. Call 311 to APD, if you witness a sign being vandalized. She is a candidate for State Senate District L.

Jamie Allard: as an assembly rep, she represents 48,000 residents and as our assembly person can end up passing 30-50 pieces of legislation in an evening. Busy summer- assembly put things through: \$525,000 for bike trails. \$250,000 for baseball fields, \$125,000 for Lion Park Grounds \$75,000 for Cook Inlet Archers. Our district puts in 16% of revenue paid in and we get 4% back. 3 police officers on duty. Trying to get 4th officer. Told we have lower crime rate. Mayor's nav center postponed until Oct 25th. BSSA not listening to our members., marijuana retail issue will be brought up during the AMCO board meeting on September 21-22. Would like a copy of BCC resolution in support of ER CC resolution against it. Pass back the blue to honor police-2nd annual this year. Encouraged 18-year-olds to go on night patrol.

5. Appearances:

a) Daryl Nelson (D) candidate for House of Representatives

b) Dan Saddler (R) candidate for House of Representatives

c) Ken McCarty (R) candidate for Senate

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6. Old Business

a) Update Starner Bridge/Aurora Borealis: Debbie Ossiander-2 bridges: Stolze Bridge which is safe and Starner Bridge which is unsafe. Closed for heavy trucks. Lack of service from MOA, Aurora Borealis. Declared a private road. Mark Littlefield: 2007 not really a road, punched in road, on private property. Legal says cannot operate on it. Working to get a public use permit. With Debbie's help, close to being able to open it up this winter and for emergency vehicles, heavy equipment etc. Aurora leads to Starner Bridge and upgrade it will have a thorough fare. Gretchen had a write up regarding the road and bridge. Started as private road. \$1M reserve funding from general fund. Good chance it would not cover-board funded for \$1M cost\$ 2.2M. There are 2 separate issues \$250, 000 survey. It is unusual to own a bridge. We have our own budget. Responsibility for bridge is a big cut to budget. 5 years ago it was declared unsafe and working to find way to repair or replace it. Jamie did request \$1M for bridge and assembly said we could bond for it. Hopefully reallocate and get it funded. When we created CBERRRSA it provided our own maintenance money without having to road bond for Chugiak-ER. No good avenue to pursue. Keep as country lane and not expand. Thank you to Senator Merrick. Hoping Fed money will go towards bridge. One member has 2 properties and cannot get renters...income lost. Aurora B-access to area for over 50 years and that owner has owned property 35 years. Adverse possession-Federal can't take access away. It was established. Safe, easy access. Initially CBERRRSA tried to get easements. Min is 10- foot lanes with shoulders. So-24' lane. Public use easement agreement needs all owners to sign and agree. Aurora Borealis needs road maintenance before it deteriorates further. Hope with signatures, the rocks will go away and some limited use will return. Rumor is floating around that Aurora Borealis will turn into a double land road. Not true! The Horse Drawn Carriage Company has lost a lot of business, thus a huge financial loss with the road blocked. Debbie remembers a school bus sliding and blocking the road, and the only access was through Aurora Borealis.

b) AMCO re: Alice's Marijuana Retail Store status Eagle River- Chugiak passed resolution in support shop. The application will be addressed during the AMCO Board Meeting September 21-22, 2022. Debbie noted there was an effort to establish a retail cannabis store in downtown Eagle River. Title 21 does not permit a retail store. SOA has not approved the application yet. We have special rules for our area. 1,000 feet is for Chugiak-ER. Jamie: Very specific can't be in an overlay district. Can't be put into a variance. The real concern is there is no regulation on how many shops can be in business. Just image 30-40 shops along downtown Eagle River. Can't change the rules without changing the law. Title 21 Chapter 10 is clear that there can't be cannabis retail shops in Chugiak-ER.

c) Eagle River Cemetery-limited cemetery space-downtown Anchorage is filled up. Group of folks pushed for one out here. Went ahead and did site search-close to ER HS. Issue is developing it. What's the next step to get it going? Park board looking for CIP projects. Jamie working with admin to get \$1M in budget. Heritage land bank(HLB) asked for market value for that plan. Ball is HLB park to transfer the land. Adam Trombley said there was no intent by MOA to stop the purchase of the land so we can go forward. Issue like road board we have mil rate and pay taxes. Mean C-ER tax payers will pay taxes. Assembly approves HLB every year...could be a motion to approve.

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7. New Business

a) Commemoration Bobbi Well was chair for 20 years, recently died sent out announcement to members. Request from historical society looking for pictures of Bobbi. Key players to honor folks who protected our benefits for living out here. Maybe a street naming committee...have naming committee bring forth a motion and naming committee will look at it. Will send us a copy from Jamie of other naming requests. Request for proclamation for Bobbi Wells...Jamie will help. Benches, parks, buildings schools, baseball diamonds are all examples of possible ways to recognize a person.

b) 2022-0106 Request for Reviewing Agency Comments-Administrative Site Plan Review non-public hearing and Planning Director will make a decision on October 10, 2022 re: new parking lot and amenities in support of Peter's Creek Park's new off-leash dog park-Debbie said Chugiak Benefit Park is private. Add comment for parking area design. Will stated this has been a long process because of all the dogs at Loretta French. Neighborhood only 1 block long...close to highway. Lots of restructuring around park. Request on line for agency comments...decision Oct 10. Small lot and park would be inside gravel pit. A suggestion was made that BCCouncil should make a comment.

c) Resolution on Residential Building Permits: Background-there are 2 different Building Safety Service Area (BSSA) permits: 1. Inside the BSSA and 2. Outside the BSSA. Presently Chugiak-Eagle River is outside which only requires a land use permit for new buildings, or additions. Inside a BSSA is very restrictive for any kind of work you would have done with lots of permits and inspections at every step of the project. Lending institution requires following building codes. Matt Cruickshank stated a big debate came up after the earthquake, claiming Eagle River had substandard construction. Geotech committee moving forward to expand the BSSA. Gretchen stated it opens up another door for us. Bank is not going to finance without inspections, but does not require it to be an MOA inspector. Elevator inspections went from \$700-1400...fund raiser for organization. Geotech is out of their lane...fiscal move. We did not have any more damage than other parts of ANC. We got hit the hardest because of the epicenter. Inspections through the MOA would potentially push the cost of a home up to \$100,000 or more. Jamie backed up Matt's resolution. Motion: Geotech advisory commission. Step beyond what asked. Will bring before assembly next October for public testimony...Jamie says move quickly. Here's the proposed resolution:

WHEREAS, the establishment of service areas allow local communities within the Municipality to choose the governmental services the community desires to be utilized; and

WHEREAS, the communities of Birchwood, Chugiak, Eagle River, Eagle River Valley, Eklutna Valley, and South Fork having voted against being included in the Building Safety Service Area; and

WHEREAS, there appears to be widespread general opposition in the community to being regulated by the Building Safety Division; and

WHEREAS, the building codes adopted by the Municipality apply area wide; and

WHEREAS, there are cost effective alternative services providing similar verification of building code compliance; and

WHEREAS, property and building owners outside the Building Safety Service Area have the option to utilize the building code compliance services of the Building

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Safety Division if they so choose;

NOW, THEREFORE, Birchwood Community Council RESOLVES that the Assembly and Administration take no action on the expansion of the Building Safety Division.

Matt calls question: Can vote only if live in Birchwood. Voted tonight...passed. Debbie requested advisory board meeting.

d) Beach Lake Trail development: Will Taygan from Chugiak Mountain Bikers Association -passed out maps. Working to improve trail systems, what has not been done well is building up greenbelt trails. 1982 coastal trail plan. This trail goes through Beach Lake Park...skiing, mushing and protect those uses...squeeze multi-use trail \$450K to start building out trail system. AMATs wants to extend bike path past lady bug rock. New shooting range trail goes outside airport. Public process starting next month...got grant working with parks and rec. BCC and dog mushers will be invited to participate in stakeholder group. Public invited. (see attached maps)

8. Open Forum-floor opened to public, any issue-none

9. Adjournment- 9PM