

Old Seward/Oceanview Community Council

MINUTES: Friday, March 10, 2023, 6:30-8:10 pm

Location: 12100 Old Seward Hwy, Rabbit Creek Church Huffman Campus
Zoom.com Meeting ID: 844 5795 0064 - Audio and Video Recorded
2023 Winter/Spring Schedule: Jan 13, Mar 10, May 12, July 14, Sept 8, Nov 10
Website: <http://communitycouncils.org/osovcc>

Board members present: Joan Henry (President), Kevin Skiba (Vice President), John Henry (Treasurer), Peggy Kircher (Secretary), and new member as of this meeting, Gary Meader (FCC Delegate).

A sign-in sheet was provided at the entry table and attendees were directed to fill-out their information.

Establish Quorum / Call to Order – A quorum was established with 19 people in attendance and 5 people attending via Zoom. President Joan Henry called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. Vice President Kevin Skiba reminded all present to fill-out the attendance sign-in sheet, explained meeting protocol, and defined voting members versus non-voting guests.

Zoom Protocol Review – John Henry read the Zoom protocol and advised that the meeting is also being recorded.

Approval of Agenda and Minutes – Joan Henry outlined the Agenda. It was moved and seconded to approve the agenda; the motion passed unanimously. It was moved and seconded to approve the Minutes of the January 13, 2023 meeting; the motion passed unanimously.

Officer Reports – *President Joan Henry* reported on items she has worked on since the last meeting. She drafted and sent letters of support for an urgent request for supplemental funds for the Eldon Subdivision Water and Sewer Improvement Project located on 120th Avenue. Member Joe Alston is our committee lead and will provide a report later in the meeting. President Henry also has been corresponding and meeting with Lucas Smith on the trails and bike path issues. He is present to take that item up later in the meeting.

Treasurer John Henry reported a balance of \$1,461.00 which includes \$0.12 interest. Our community council has no means to fund ourselves, so we have decided to have a donation basket at each meeting should anyone feel inclined. The funds will be counted at the end of each meeting by community members present, other than the Board, and we will report on that fund from this point forward. Our intent is that at the end of the year, we will take the balance of that donation fund and put it into a park fund to help improve one of our parks in the Oceanview area.

Mr. Henry reported that the Anchorage Assembly has indefinitely suspended the Holton Hills sale in Girdwood, per communication with Randy Sulte, who is not able to attend this meeting.

Gary Meader, our newly elected FCC Delegate, reported that the FCC had two meetings since we last met. Links to their minutes are provided here: [January 18](#) and [February 15](#). Mr. Meaders introduced topics that were addressed at those meetings to be parking mandates, snow piles, reduction of parking spaces, Beth Nordland with Anchorage Parks Foundatin reminded everyone of the many Parks and Rec issues on the ballot, and Suzanne LaFrance addressed snow removal, temporary snow sites, and staffing issues within the municipality. The next FCC meeting is Wednesday, March 15.

Committee Reports

Community Patrol – Jeff Childs reported the community patrol has spent 93.25 hours patrolling since January and introduced Pete Caruso who recently re-joined the community patrol. Mr. Caruso reminded anyone who wants to join to please contact them. He also commended the good work of Mr. Childs who has been the sole patroller in our area and was responsible for helping close down some illegal activity (a quasi-chop shop) at a home off Johns Road this past year. Jeff showed the signs they use on their vehicles (red, white and blue Community Patrol) and noted they wear yellow jackets that say “Community Patrol”, so say hello if you see them around the neighborhood. Their goal is to keep our area safe and healthy. Don’t be afraid to report a non-emergency or emergency to the appropriate lines (3-1-1 or 9-1-1). If you see something suspicious, say something, reporting any specifics you can (address, license, pictures or videos) to us so we can follow up. We keep watch and spend time logging all information; it’s very effective in correcting problems we have in the neighborhood and getting APD code enforcement to help. Mr. Childs said they are monitoring a few properties for reported drug activity or other things. They will be bringing on John Henry to the community patrol soon. If you’re a frequent walker, watch for mischief; keep outdoor lights on for others; when neighbors are out of town, remove piled newspapers; create the habit of checking your vehicle and home door locks before bed; with upcoming elections, reminder not to leave ballots in your mailbox as there are a lot of thefts. Member Gary Matthews reported that Christ our Savior Lutheran Church has had a history of drug dealers on their property. Mr. Childs said they will step up monitoring in that area and advised members to take down license plate numbers to pass on to them if you see further suspicious activity there. Contacts: Jeff Childs 907-240-7880 and Pete Caruso 907-250-5379

Eldon Subdivision WDID and LID – Joe Alston reported on the Eldon Subdivision work to seek funding for a Water Distribution Improvement District and Lateral Improvement District for the much needed water and sewer improvement projects. The subdivision of 25 lots are on well water and over half use on-property septic systems which have had increasing problems for almost 20 years. The extremely high cost to upgrade (estimated at \$200,000 per lot) is out of reach for homeowners, therefore it is imperative to acquire supplemental funding. OSOVCC sent a letter to Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility (AWWU) requesting their support of supplemental funds. Mr. Alston and Whitney and Justin Blount (of Eldon Subdv) have contacted Senator Lisa Murkowski to request what other infrastructure funding is available. Sen. Murkowski is going to put together two programmatic funding requests (IIJA and CDS funds), which would allow MOA/AWWU to install water and sewer lines up to property lines. Then each property owner would be responsible to get the lines extended to their own house (approximately \$10k+ per lot). Senator Cathy Giessel has been working with Joe & Whitney by requesting CAPSIS funding (TPS-67878). They will be reaching out to Congresswoman Mary Peltola

with the same packet of information to request her assistance. Mr. Alston summarized the importance of the Eldon Subdivision water and sewer access project as a life safety issue due to a lack of area wide fire protection, and ongoing health issues due to the contaminated water supply. Mr. Alston further explained the importance of getting these upgrades done prior to the 120th Upgrade (#1 on our community's Capital Improvement Projects list), which some have heard could possibly receive funding in 2025. These upgrades will bring long-term safety and value to the larger 23-acre area overall.

OSOVCC Trails and Bike Paths – Lucas Smith provided an update on Trails and Bike Paths. Alaska Long Trail and Anchorage Parks Foundation (two non-profits) have proposed a project, requesting \$1 million from the Legislature to connect Oceanview Bluff Park to Potter Marsh. When asked for more details on the project, they said they cannot provide details until they secure funding. Mr. Smith has gone out knocking on doors in the neighborhood to raise awareness of this project. After talking to many homeowners in the area he learned that this small segment is only a piece of a larger project that was fully explored in 2006. There was unified opposition within the community to that trail project once the details were exposed. Those records still exist somewhere, and the project failed. Community members believe the connection already exists via Old Seward Highway to Potter Marsh. The million dollars they're asking for is essentially to re-work and fund the same project which would expose the same problems that were uncovered in 2006. Mr. Smith suggests the community council take a unified approach to opposing the project as was successful in the past.

Member John Pletcher stated that he lived through and fought the trails project from October 2002, when it first came up, until it finally died in 2006. It basically was running through his backyard. Governor Murkowski took it off the statewide transportation plan and that's how it died. But a considerable amount of money was spent on it and what they really wanted to do is extend the downtown Tony Knowles Coastal Trail along the bluff through the Coastal Wildlife Refuge (CWR) into Oceanview Bluff Park and Oceanview Park, then down the railroad easement to Potter Marsh, causing substantial damages to the Coastal Wildlife Refuge. Also, there was already limited parking in all the park areas, so causing an increase in summer traffic in already crowded neighborhoods was not a good idea. Mr. Pletcher further pointed out that during the last legislative session there was an appropriation for this in the budget. There were 14 projects from one or more non-profit groups and Governor Dunleavy vetoed 8 out of 14 of them, and this trail request was vetoed. Lucas Smith agreed that information was correct. There are already existing trail connections. Once trails are in, what are the costs to maintain it? There is a house that was condemned and donated to MOA next to Oceanview Bluff Park. He's heard the retaining wall costs more than the house and is considered only a temporary fix. From the first study it was noted that by building retaining walls you cut off the fresh water supply from the bluff down to the coastal wildlife refuge, which would severely impact birds and wildlife. It's simply not feasible.

Mr. Pletcher further pointed out that the matter of the railroad easements is on appeal to the Ninth Circuit Court and awaiting decisions, which could have some impact on this issue as well, so we ought to hear a report on that in the future. Also, he recalled that there is a 2004 9th circuit case that ruled railroad easements for recreational use is illegal. Railroad easements are not owned by the Railroad.

In summary, given the budget problems in the city, state, and federal governments already, there are far better ways to use public money than spending \$1 million to promote studying this again, 20 years later.

President Joan Henry announced that Lucas Smith has worked on a Resolution and that she understood this may need to get out to other community councils as well.

OSOVCC 10-Year Review of OSOV CC Boundary – John Henry reported on behalf of Stan Moll. They have a meeting on boundaries next Tuesday and Stan will be there. We have our OSOVCC recommendations submitted already (to extend the north boundary to Minnesota and the east boundary to New Seward Highway) and they've received several documents from our community on what they think the boundaries should be. The Assembly will be taking this up and Stan will give us an update at our next meeting.

Old Business

Capital Improvement Projects (2023/2024) – At the last meeting we talked about these projects and have a draft that we will add to the Community Council website. If there are no further suggestions from community members, we will be posting this to the CC website. Jeff Childs brought up the State's plan a few years ago to modify the O'Malley-New Seward exchange; there was talk of a crosswise overpass type thing like what's on Glenn Hwy. Jeff's heard that plan was nixed, so we should put it on our radar to track their plans should our boundary change to include the West side of New Seward Hwy and O'Malley.

New Business

Paul & Ruth Lemp Community Garden at Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church – Gary Matthews with Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church provided a handout and reported on the community garden plans. The Church has three acres and a few years ago the Church Council decided to use some funds donated by church members to provide gardening ability for people in the surrounding community. They also applied for and received several grants to help build the garden center. They put up a fence and added beds in 2021. In 2022, the Community Garden added more beds and reached out to the new senior living center, which is within walking distance. They had 30 steel garden beds total; 15 of the residents from the senior center made it their gathering place, there's even a playground adjacent to it. The area has full sun exposure all day and it's an organic garden. The soil is expensive, it's a 50/50 mix of topsoil from Anchorage and compost from Seward, they also provided Dr. Earth organic fertilizer. It has been so successful and exceeded their wildest dreams. This spring they are adding 20 more steel beds (17 and 32 inches high) and another 450 gallon water tank. They have been working with a non-profit group called Yarcucopia. They will be holding their first gardening workshop with help from the Cooperative Extension Service in Palmer on April 20. Plans for the future include putting in a sidewalk on the far side of the garden, cleanup the lot next door, remove cottonwoods, add wildflowers, and picnic benches. They charge \$15 per bed for the summer of 2023.

Representatives/Community Reports

APD – no report.

AFD – Fire Station #9, Senior Captain Sean Fredenhagen reported and encouraged support of ballot initiatives for replacing fire engines, ambulances, radio upgrades, and infrastructure. April 1st is graduation day for new firefighters at the academy. They recently launched an app called PulsePoint that will send notifications of nearby emergencies, such as a neighbor experiencing a cardiac arrest to neighbors who may be able to help with lifesaving CPR, if they have appropriate training. In the future they may be used for notification in the case of wildfire evacuations. AFD is planning woodlots, paid by grants. Due to fire hazards, this will allow residents a place to dump their wood debris rather than burning it on their property. AFD is working on plans preparing for wildfires and mitigation work in South Anchorage.

State Representative Craig Johnson – Not available, no report.

State Senator Cathy Giessel joined us on zoom. Regarding the proposed New Seward Highway exchange at O'Malley, that project starts at 36th Avenue with many large project upgrades, covering the entire distance. Rabbit Creek and Abbott Loop Community Councils have come out against the large interchange. The Assembly passed a resolution opposing this massive rebuild as well as others along that same stretch of highway. On March 5, the Anchorage Caucus met at UAA and the main topic from the public that attended was school funding and the fact that the base student allocation has fallen way behind inflation. The base student allocation is currently \$5k per student and if adjusted for inflation would be \$7.5k per student. The Senate Education Committee is working on a bill that proposes a new funding regime to increase the base by \$1k this year and \$300 next year, and every year thereafter, based on inflation. Of course, it could decrease as well.

Cathy is carrying a bill that creates a new defined benefit retirement system for state and municipal employees. There was a defined benefit program plan in place until 2006. The actuarial company doing the estimates gave the state bad advice and the fund was underfunded, so the defined benefit was discontinued and we went to a defined contribution. However, what has resulted is when people are vested after five years, they can take their State's contribution, leave state service, and take their benefits with them. They're finding that with police and firefighters, in particular, they are losing staff at that five-year mark, and it costs about \$25k just to onboard each new personnel in those departments. They are also finding that State Troopers were offering a \$20k hiring bonus to attract applicants; Corrections officers are getting a \$10k hiring bonus. In Nome and Bethel they had to stop taking new cases because there is a huge Public defender shortage. The proposed new Defined Benefit System has been worked on over the last 10 years with input from those affected, particularly the Police and Fire departments. We hope to put a system in place that will allow employees to gather enough retirement to support themselves once retired while not sinking the state financially. It will be heard in the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee on March 13. Lastly, raising awareness that the South terminal parking structure will be renovated near the end of March so there will be closures, and parking available elsewhere with those companies providing shuttle service. Sen. Giessel also reminded people that she's having a meeting on March 25, at Cornerstone Church. A member asked whether her proposed Defined Benefit plan includes medical benefits. Senator

Giessel said there isn't one like they used to have but there will be a health savings allowance they can use should they retire before age 65 when medicare benefits kick in. It was unaffordable for the State to have a medical benefit as in the past.

Assembly Members

Suzanne LaFrance - Not available, no report.

Randy Sulte - John Henry reported on behalf of Randy Sulte from notes he emailed to OSOVCC.

- Holton Hills Disposal (AO 2022-103S) was postponed indefinitely.
- Regarding requests that Venus Way and Gwenn Drive needs a three way stop. Follow-up from traffic engineer after site visit. Currently, there are no stop or yield signs at the intersection. My understanding is that this is because they are low volume roads and normal right-of-way rules have been considered adequate. My staff are currently reevaluating this location and I will let you know what our findings are.
- All election information and propositions before the voters is located on the Municipality's election web page. He strongly encouraged everyone to look at materials for the propositions and sign-up for ballot tracking. Very useful tools. Get out and vote.
- A Coastal Trail Extension being proposed by the Anchorage Parks Foundation - Plans to install a trail along the bluff from Oceanview Bluff Park to Potters Marsh Boardwalk on public land. (Lucas Smith has a lot of detail on this).

ASD School Board – Dave Donley - Not available, no report.

Community Outreach from JBER - Not available, no report.

Announcements / Current Issues of Note

- There was a Liquor License Renewal from the Wine House in the Huffman business park area, across from the Post Office.
- April 4, 2023 is the Municipal Election. There are 7 Assembly seats, 2 School Board seats and 14 Propositions. Information can be found [here](#), and you can sign up for the election report by calling 907-243-8683.
- This weekend, March 11-12, is the Special Olympics Alaska State Games at Hilltop and they're looking for volunteers both Saturday and Sunday (events are cross country and alpine skiing, snowboarding, and floor hockey)
- There is a website called Anchorage Works (#ANCWorks) where you can report things such as a homeless camp, street maintenance, noise complaints, recycling, right-of-way concerns, etc.
- A member alerted the body that there's a large snowpile next to the church at Oceanview Drive. Members discussed this area as a long-term problem, even in summer months, there have been multiple accidents. A member said he would contact the State DOT.
- Irene Boll introduced herself as a person running for School Board Seat C.

Adjournment - The meeting adjourned at 8:10 pm.

Minutes prepared by the Secretary, Peggy Kircher. This meeting was recorded and if you wish to hear the full discussion contact the FCC.