

Eklutna Valley Community Council
October 18, 2018
Meeting minutes

The meeting was chaired by council president Margan Grover and began at 7:10 p.m. The council met at Skip and Tena Cheely's home because the Eklutna Ranger Station was unavailable. Twenty-two council members were present: Skip and Tena Cheely, Margan Grover, Dan Thompson, Bob Reagan, Rick and Lisa Sinnott, Debbie and Steve Thon, Buff Rix, Randy Bangerter, Helen Bohn, Erlinda Downing, Glenn and Mary Keller, Josiah Trout, Bob and Cindy McElroy, Mike and Gwyn Wiedmer, Greg McConnell and Monique Garbowitz.

The meeting agenda was approved with one addition. Rick had brought several historical photos of Eklutna Valley and suggested that we take a minute to pass them around. A motion was made and seconded to include an Eklutna History Minute on the agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

The minutes of the April 5, 2018, meeting were approved with no changes. Bob Reagan reported \$466.64 in the council's funds.

OLD BUSINESS

Chugiak-Eagle River Advisory Board report. Bob Reagan said there was nothing new to report.

MTA upgrade of Internet service. According to Margan, who talked to several workers installing the fiber optic cable, the upgrade has been delayed and may not be completed until next spring. Bob McElroy observed that splicing fiber optic cable takes a lot of time and requires specialized skills. It's also temperature sensitive work that cannot be performed in cold conditions. Thus, it seems as if the splicing may be the primary holdup.

Debbie said she had already signed up for an upgrade with MTA and Randy recommended that others do so to provide a little additional incentive. Bob McElroy didn't think that would help speed up the process, primarily because cable splicers were in such short supply. Rick observed that signing up now probably wouldn't hurt.

On a related issue, Helen observed that the Eklutna homeowners' Facebook page has several "friends" who don't live in the valley. Several residents have moved away and several people were unknown to those attending the meeting. Keith Darby is the administrator of that page. It was agreed that we would prefer to limit participants to valley residents and property owners because sensitive and personal information is shared. Helen said she would work with Keith to clean up the list. Those present also agreed that nonmembers need to be removed from the council's mailing list.

Eklutna Valley history and Municipality of Anchorage historic preservation plan. Margan emailed copies of the five-page historical summary to council members and had paper copies available at the meeting. After the last meeting, a committee had compiled and edited the brief history for the upcoming Anchorage historic preservation plan because so little was known of Eklutna Valley's history. The brief history has been submitted to the municipal office of historic preservation. Skip noted that, contrary to the factoid that Eklutna Valley had no street lights, there were actually five street lights along Eklutna Lake Road, some public and some private. Rick said he would send that change to Kristine Bunnell at the historic preservation office.

According to Kristine, the municipality's historic preservation plan will be available for public review and comment "after the first of the year."

While discussing the genesis and format of the brief summary, Rick passed around three historic photos: two of the lake's outlet showing one of the early storage dams and several buildings (dated about 1931 and 1949-50) and one of a party camping on the lakeshore in 1941. Bob Reagan recommended contacting ML&P for historic photos of the hydroelectric facilities and lake.

Chugiak Senior Center garden. Lisa discussed the work that was done last spring and summer at the Chugiak Senior Center's garden. Lisa's mother Carol Warren had asked that our community council help with a small garden in back of the assisted living facility. Lisa had agreed at the last meeting to scope it out and get back to potential volunteers. The "garden" is actually a concrete raised bed less than two feet wide and about 30 feet long. In addition, the facility had four small barrel planters near the front doors. It certainly didn't require a lot of volunteer help. So Lisa, Rick and Carol rooted out as much equisetum as possible and planted rhubarb and strawberry plants donated by the Rixes, some perennials from the Sinnott's garden, and bought a few annuals. By all accounts the facility residents and staff appreciated the effort and even harvested rhubarb and strawberries for pies. The chief difficulty was, of course, the equisetum, which came back with a vengeance. Lisa suggested that we remove and replace the dirt in the garden next spring and several members expressed interest in helping. Lisa will send out a request for volunteers in late spring 2019.

Eklutna Valley crime. Although it wasn't on the agenda, Erlinda raised an ongoing concern shared by all council members about the increasing incidences of crime in the valley. Members often post notices and photos of suspicious vehicles and people as well as break-ins and thefts on the Eklutna homeowners' Facebook page. Bob McElroy has observed many instances of vehicles parked on his driveway with their lights out and has begun to ask them to leave. Dan and several others have asked suspicious people questions. Others have noted vehicles parked in roadside pullouts with lights out and vehicle activity at Charlotte's unoccupied home near Mile 5. Needles have been found at several roadside pullouts, and the state park is also experiencing more criminal activity.

Erlinda asked if others would help purchase one or two cameras to monitor traffic on Eklutna Lake Road and post a sign warning that the road was being monitored. A long discussion ensued. Several people noted that as many as 2,000 vehicles use the road on some days in summer and that the frequency of traffic would be difficult to monitor. It would be difficult to capture license plate numbers on moving vehicles from the side of the road. Helen noted that many criminals use stolen vehicles anyway. Finally, without any idea which vehicle might have been used by the criminal, how would we figure out which vehicle to focus on? Rick pointed out that the AWWU water treatment facility has a camera pointed at the road and APD has used it before to identify criminal activity. Thus, if APD has the staff and time to follow up on thefts, they can access photos from the AWWU camera.

Many members said that they have placed one or more surveillance cameras on their driveways or near their homes to monitor activity. The common consensus seemed to be that Erlinda should do the same. Lisa volunteered to help her mount one or more cameras. Rick agreed to advise Erlinda on a good camera for her situation. But she still thought that a roadside camera would be best and volunteered to monitor the camera herself. Nobody else seemed to think that would work.

Someone suggested asking AWWU if they could upload the photos from their camera to a website so that the public could look at them. There may be privacy or other issues that keep AWWU from providing these photos to the public; however, Margan agreed to send AWWU a letter asking for their help. Erlinda still insisted that a sign was needed on Eklutna Lake Road to warn criminals that they were being watched, perhaps a Neighborhood Watch sign. Our community council talked to APD several years ago about the Neighborhood Watch program. After a lengthy discussion on why the muni's crime watch program wouldn't work in Eklutna Valley (primarily because few residents can see their neighbor's house), Rick suggested that Margan's letter also ask if AWWU or the community council could mount a sign on their fence or other suitable site to warn the public that cameras were present.

NEW BUSINESS

EVCC access to the ranger station. When Margan contacted Ranger Keith Wilson about holding this meeting at the ranger station, he told her he was out of state. He said the lock box with a key to the doors had been removed due to increased thefts in the park, particularly in the Eklutna campground area. And he has no volunteer hosts at this time. So he wasn't able to allow the community council to use the ranger station. Rick volunteered to call Keith to discuss future options for using the station.

Election of officers. Our council elections are held in the fall of even-numbered years. After some discussion it became clear that no one new was interested in running for one of the four open positions. As all of the current officers were willing to take another two-year term, a motion was made and seconded that all of the current officers be re-elected. The current officers are Margan (president), Rick (vice president), Bob Reagan (treasurer) and Dan (sergeant-at-arms). The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at about 8:15 p.m.