

GOVERNMENT HILL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

c/o Community Councils Center • 1057 West Fireweed Lane, Suite 100
Anchorage, AK 99503

Jody Sola, President

Stephanie Kesler Vice President

Peter Partnow, Secretary

Susanne DiPietro, Treasurer

Bob French, FCC Representative

Greg Miller, Ron Clark, Pete Murphy At-Large Board Members



DRAFT Minutes GHCC Monthly Meeting Sep 16, 2021 @ 6:30PM Via Zoom

President Jody Sola called the meeting to order at 6:35pm.

Attendees:

Stephanie Kesler; Susanne DiPietro; Ron Clark; Joy Boston-JBER; Assembly member Chris Constant; Peggy Wilcox; Briana ? - Girdwood Board of Supervisors; Jody Sola; Will Sola; Peter Murphy; Tristan Walsh, aide to Rep. Fields; Steve Ribuffo – Port of Alaska; Mercedes Colbert, aide to Sen Begich; Brennon Land; Steve Gerlak; Margo Bellamy, Anchorage School Board; Denise Elsenbast; Margy Hughes; Thomas Pease; John McKay; Julie Leonard, Spenard Community Council; Tim Sullivan, Alaska Railroad; Tom Brennan.

Approval of Agenda – Ms. Kesler moved to approve the agenda; Peter Murphy seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Approval of May minutes – defer to next month.

Legislative Update:

Senator Tom Begich's office – Mercedes Colbert reported that the third special session ended on Tuesday. The Legislature passed an affordable \$1,100 PFD as part of a larger appropriation bill and it was signed by the Governor. Residents should expect their dividend payment only about a two week later than usual. And now the Governor has called a fourth special session for October 1 to consider a fiscal plan. It is possible that COVID relief could be added to the call. The telehealth bill that had been a topic during the third special session but did not pass

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also could be added to the Fourth. The Fourth session could be delayed by a few days if not enough members are able to be present.

Rep Zack Fields – Tristan Walsh. Mr. Wash reported that the Governor’s bills introduced during third special session concerning COVID 19 are actions that the Governor has the authority to do without additional legislation. There were many floor amendments that caused the bills to fail. Mr. Walsh also reported that Rep Fields; office worked with Sen. Begich to expand the use of a \$200,000 grant received by the Curling Club during the Parnell administration. The grant now can be used for curling equipment. The Curling Club will be able to use about \$42K for equipment.

Assembly Update: Chris Constant noted that cottonwood trees were taken down near the Curling Club in order to preserve the building. He reported that the MOA is in a medical crisis without leadership. There is no room at the hospital. The Providence medical director and medical professionals who attended Tuesday evening’s Assembly meeting were jeered and spit upon by supporters of the mayor, and that was very dispiriting to see. The Assembly may try to lead on COVID-19 mitigation, perhaps with a mask mandate. Mr. Constant additionally reported on two major projects that he is involved with. The first is the MOA’s homeless services array. The Mayor’s proposal for a large shelter was not feasible due to cost and structural problems. He is negotiating intensely with the Mayor’s team. The Assembly has hired experts to perform an engineering review and to work on the budget. In addition, MOA is anticipating extra expenses (to be covered by FEMA) for mass care, which is separate from homeless shelters and necessitated by COVID. The Assembly will not approve a plan without sufficient information to evaluate cost and feasibility. The second project is the MOA reapportionment process that will follow the state’s redistricting. Mr. Constant is the chair of this effort. The State redistricting board has said it will finish by November 10. Within 60 days of that date, the Assembly will declare the need for reapportionment. The municipal group likely will begin meeting on Sept 30th before the State’s final maps are ready, just to get started. Because of the State’s timeline, however, the new municipal maps will not be ready in time for the April 2022 election. It may be possible to have a special election a few months after the April 2022 election to adopt a 12th member to the body. If not, that will happen at the April 2023 election. Mr. Constant encouraged everyone to participate in the reapportionment process. Mr. Constant also reported that he has submitted an ordinance to confirm that the Assembly chair has the authority to set the policy for Assembly meetings, in order to delineate lines of authority between the legislative and the executive.

He also noted that a “whistle blower” complaint was filed today by the Mayor’s recently appointed Director of Real Estate. The Mayor then fired the Real Estate Director. In response to a question about the 12th assembly member, Mr Constant said it will be a new seat.

In response to a question about the Municipal Librarian, Mr. Constant said he does not support current appointee because she is not qualified. It is clear under the Municipal Charter that the Assembly has the duty and authority to approve mayoral appointments. Mr. Constant said he will continue to watch carefully for any proposed library budget cuts – for example, the current proposal is to cut Sunday service at the library.

Treasurer's report- Susanne's microphone was not working but she later reported that GHCC has \$2,338.04 in Savings and \$700 in Spending at its Credit Union 1 account.

JBER update: Joy Boston reported that the 9th Army Band will be playing around town at various events in the community, including at the Native Heritage Center's Suicide Prevention gathering. Also, in July US Army Alaska Commander Major General Eifler took command. Finally, JBER will soon have a new Arctic Strategic Studies Center.

Community Announcements:

- Alaska Child and Family - Alexandra Peter said that Alaska Child and Family has residential centers for boys and girls plus therapeutic foster care. Alaska has many youth in need of a placement in a therapeutic foster home. She encouraged anyone who is interested to go to the AK Child and Family web site and contact her for more information.
- Briana from the Girdwood Board of Supervisors gave an update from the Girdwood Cemetery Committee. The Anchorage Cemetery will be full in seven years. Both Girdwood and Eagle River have identified locations for local cemeteries. A bond is planned for the April ballot to fund these two cemeteries (amounts would be about \$3 million for Girdwood and about \$4 million for Eagle River plus about \$2 million for upgrades to Anchorage).
- Margo Bellamy of the Anchorage School Board said she will bring reports to GHCC. She said the Anchorage School District's COVID dashboard has been updated to show the status of each school. ASD has had problems finding bus drivers because of absences for illness with COVID-19. ASD has COVID-19 testing sites in most of its schools. ASD has transitioned to contact notification instead of quarantine when it is advised that someone in an ASD facility has tested positive for COVID-19.
- Ms. Sola reported that Solid Waste Services has a survey out to assess which neighborhoods would be the best for a glass curbside recycling program. Please encourage your neighbors to take the survey. Mr. Constant said that the new director of SWS has confirmed the commitment to offer at no extra charge the smaller size of the bear-proof can. People can call and request the bear proof can. SWS does not currently have enough supply to give all residents the bear-proof cans.

- Ms. Sola said that the GHCC Parks Committee and MOA Parks Department want to present the GHCC Parks Master Plan on October 26. The group agreed that the best time would be 5:30 pm (via Zoom). The event will be posted on Nextdoor, the GHCC FaceBook page and elsewhere. Ms. Sola will ask the Parks Department to post notices of the meeting at neighborhood parks.

Business Updates

- Alaska Railroad: Tim Sullivan reported that the summer passenger season ended last weekend. The numbers were better than expected – about 75% of the 2019 numbers. Freight has not quite picked back up again. In response to comments and questions about horns, he explained that conductors are required to sound the horn at crossings and whenever the train starts moving. In response to a question about electric or natural gas locomotives, he said AKRR would need to wait until the prices come down before it can afford those innovations.
- Port of Alaska-Steve Ribuffo Reported that during the summer, the Congressional delegation visited. Sen. Murkowski’s office later released a YouTube video on infrastructure that highlighted the POA. He gave a slide show to update the progress of piles and various structures at the petroleum cement terminal. He noted that air is inserted into the water near each pile as it is being driven in order to dissipate the sound vibrations and mitigate impacts on marine mammals. It is hoped that the project will be complete by the end of the year; however, there have been numerous work stoppages to protect Beluga whales that have been coming through. In terms of revenue, 2020 was good for POA revenue and volume and this year has been roughly the same pace.

At 8 pm Ms. Sola called for a motion adjourn. Ms. Kesler so moved; second from Peter Murphy.