

Eagle River Valley Community Council Meeting
Wednesday, December 8, 2021 6:30pm
REGULAR MEETING
Zoom Virtual Meeting
MEETING MINUTES – Approved January 12, 2022

Call to order at 6:32pm by Julie Jessen.

Quorum was established: 19 members; 3 guests in attendance.

Federation webpage: [Federation of Community Councils](#)

Introductions and Announcements: none

Meeting Minutes Approval: Draft meeting minutes from November 10 meeting were reviewed. Motion to approve by Tom Freeman; seconded by Art Skoog. Approved by a vote of 19 yea, 0 nay, 0 abstain.

New Business:

Wildfire hazard maps - postponed to future meeting

Jennifer Schmidt, Assistant Professor of Natural Resource Management and Policy

[Institute of Social and Economic Research \(ISER\)](#)

University of Alaska Anchorage

2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)

<https://www.amats2050.com/open-public-review>

The MTP is a 20-year, integrated, multimodal plan that addresses both current and future transportation needs.

Public comment period December 1-31.

OPTION 1: Take the [Survey](#)

OPTION 2: Detailed Review

- Review the [draft Goals and Objectives](#) and send your feedback. Send comments by:
 1. Filling out the [comment form](#) (select MTP Goals & Objectives as the topic).
 2. Emailing your comments to amatsinfo@anchorageak.gov.
 3. Sending your comments by mail to: Permit & Development Center, 4700 Elmore Road P.O. Box 196650, Anchorage AK 99519-6650

- There is an opportunity to provide input and feedback on long-range, municipal infrastructure plan. Consider what Eagle River will need 20 years from now, given rate of growth that is expected. Identify projects and funding options.
- Consider capital improvement projects, e.g. underground utilities managed by the muni.
- Fire Department need for additional trucks (given population growth).
- Identify current, transportation and municipal infrastructure issues to include in the survey.
- Federal infrastructure funds are available to Alaska. Identify any problem areas to your state representative.
- Does this survey include a pedestrian paths? Yes. Mr. Scott Bailey will draft a description of the Genora Street to Fire House Lane bicycle/walking trail issues.
- This survey includes both municipal and state transportation plans.

Follow-up items:

Application for Marijuana Establishment License

Alice's, 12111 Horseshoe Drive, Eagle River

Update was provided by Ms. Joy Webb:

- On April 14, 2021, Anchorage Clerk's Office received a notice from Alice's, #29087 that they have submitted an application for a marijuana retail license to Alaska Marijuana Control Office. The Municipality of Anchorage will

Eagle River Valley Community Council

December 8, 2021

Page 2

not accept a municipal license application until the State of Alaska, Alcohol & Marijuana Control Board determines the state application is “complete.” Alice’s state application is currently in “incomplete” status.

- Is there a restriction for marijuana establishments near a gun shop? No, restrictions are for schools, playground, housing facilities (public housing), child care center, homeless/transient shelter, habilitative care facility, park, residential district, MAC center, neighborhood recreation centers.
- The Anchorage Assembly has the authority to approve both the license application and any variance required to operate.
- Ms. Jamie Allard: The marijuana shops must first approach community councils. The Assembly will take direction from the community councils regarding approving or denying license and variance applications.
- Can they set up cultivation at this site? The site is zoned CE-B-3, commercial. Property must be zoned “Industrial” for cultivation to be approved. There are also restrictions in ER regarding cultivation.

DoT trail improvement timeline- Genora St to Fire House Ln bicycle/walking trail is in need of repair.

Ms. Jessen contacted DoT (Mr. Rzepka) regarding this section of trail, as DoT is responsible for that section of highway. There are no projects planned in the area in the near future.

- There is an earthquake-related project near the VFW.
- Identify all transportation-related projects in the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) survey discussed above.

Population growth and Anchorage Platting Board

Mr. Kevin Cross, chair of Anchorage Platting Board presented the following information:

- Approximately 1500 new construction lots have been approved in ER in last 2 1/2 years.
- Three-fourths (3/4) of the Platting Board’s activity is Eagle River-based. As soon as construction material becomes more readily available, these builders will start building. A great deal of expansion will likely occur in next 5 years.
- Seventy percent (70%) of the growth in Anchorage is within Eagle River.
- Keep this growth in mind when submitting ideas to 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) survey (AMATs).

ERVCC Meetings – Continue with Zoom in 2022?

- A motion was made by Ruth Armstrong and seconded by Jamie Allard to switch monthly meetings back to “face-to-face” beginning in January.
- Ms. Joy Webb provided an update on meeting facilities:
 - Gruening Middle School is not available for any public meetings this school year.
 - Ravenwood Elementary School library was used in the past but this space is very limited. It would not accommodate the 20-30+ attendees we’ve had lately.
- Some members raised concerns about exposure to COVID and their immune-compromised family members.
- Our increased attendance may be due to ease of participation using Zoom.
- Ms. Allard offered to reserve a room for meetings in the Community Room 170, near the Library. This is not in our council area. Do our by-laws required meetings to be held within our area?
- Ideally, in-person meetings could be held with an option to attend via Zoom as well. Ms. Webb will look into the Community Room facilities to see if this is possible.
- This change will be discussed again in January.

Old Business:

Jamie Allard - Anchorage Assembly

Ms. Allard provided the following update:

- Mask mandate was lifted in the municipality.
- Chapter 28, election laws, have been changed. Amendments are still being processed. A public hearing is tentatively scheduled for December 21.

Eagle River Valley Community Council

December 8, 2021

Page 3

- The Assembly voted on/approved an operating budget.
- The municipality is \$74M in debt. Taxes and the mill rates will go up as a result. Ms. Allard feels the municipality doesn't have the funds that the Assembly is spending.
- The Anchorage School District budget is \$876M. This will also increase your taxes. Approximately 60% of your tax dollars go to the school district.
- FEMA reimbursement for COVID – when will these funds be received? There is an approval process that must occur. There is no guarantee these funds will be approved. Sullivan Arena is longest-running, COVID-related homeless shelter in the nation. Municipality must submit proof of COVID-related costs.
- Our municipal bond rating has dropped.
- Thirty-five per cent (35%) of Gruening Middle School earthquake repairs have been FEMA-reimbursed. Still waiting for approval of remaining costs.
- Public testimony at the Anchorage Assembly regarding reapportionment topic is tentatively scheduled for 1/7/22.
- Ms. Allard is working with state legislators to have a hospital placed in Eagle River, potentially across from Fred Meyer.

Eagle River Community Patrol – Cliff Cook

Mr. Cook provided the following update:

- November patrols were conducted for 17 hours covering 90 miles.
- The Community Patrol provided traffic control support for Thanksgiving Blessing at Joy Lutheran Church on November 22.
- The Patrol will also support the Special Olympics Polar Plunge on December 18 at Goose Lake, near UAA. On December 17, VIPs will participate. On December 18, eight hundred (800) participants are expected; participants will "plunge" at rate of 200/hour. This event is open to participants only; no spectators allowed.
<https://specialolympicsalaska.org/events/polar-plunge/>
- An APD liaison officer, Sonny LaRosa, has been assigned to Eagle River. His shift is Saturday-Tuesday so this doesn't align with any community council meetings. Councils may request that an officer visit their meetings.
- Eagle River has been quiet from crime perspective, probably due to large volume of snow. Be aware of providing opportunities for petty theft. If possible, use a remote car starter instead of leaving keys in a running car on cold days. There has been an uptick in vehicle theft.
- Be mindful of leaving garage doors open both as an opportunity for theft and for risk of frozen pipes.
- Be aware of 'porch pirates' with the upcoming holiday season. They follow the delivery trucks.

Questions included:

- There is an APD officer in my neighborhood. Should we invite him to attend our meeting? Approach should be to go through our liaison officer with this request or have Ms. Jessen contact APD Public Affairs.

Committee Reports:

CBERRRSA (Road Board): James McCurtain/ Arlene Rasic

James.mccurtain@hotmail.com, 907-301-4042

Ms. Rasic provided the following update from the November CBERRRSA meeting:

- Send road, transportation and municipal facilities issues or improvement ideas to Ms. Julie Jessen/Ms. Joy Webb so they can be submitted for Capital Improvement Plan.
- The AMATS and DOT are working on the 2050 long range projects. This would be a good time for our council to work with our other area councils and representatives to promote the widening of the Glenn Highway from Muldoon Interchange to Eklutna for safety and capacity improvements. Proposed federal funding of projects in the next few years can help get these projects moving.

Eagle River Valley Community Council

December 8, 2021

Page 4

- They are also working with the State of Ak Maintenance to get the Snow removal along the pathway off the Old Glenn Highway, from North Eagle River to Peters Creek done.
- The snow disposal site is located past Powder Ridge subdivision and the Foreman is working with Eklutna to obtain a long-term location.
- Traffic safety and upgrades are being designed for the Hillcrest Drive and South Birchwood intersection at Chugiak High School.
- The foreman presented the board with the 2022 Capital Improvement Projects, based on maintenance priorities. Our council needs to provide feedback to the board if there are any other concerns for our area roads that need repair.

- Here are the 2022 ERVCC area projects

Skyline Drainage	2400' of ditching and culverts	\$ 158,000
West Skyline Pull Out	Vehicle Pullout and drainage	\$ 87,000
Future ERVCC projects (when funding is available)		
Citation Road		
ERLoop to Crestview, sidewalk, curb & gutter and drainage		\$ 1,200,000
Katelyn		
Drainage repair from Driftwood Bay to end		\$ 525,000

Mr. Mark Littlefield provided the following information: (email: Mark.littlefield@anchorageak.gov)

- CBERRRSA has been in negotiations with DoT regarding snow removal issues on state roads in Eagle River. It's difficult to get time with DoT. DoT has improved lately with snow removal on Old Glenn.
- Our Streets & Maintenance crews don't have capacity to absorb downtown ER.
- When transportation or road-related issues are submitted to the AMATS survey, please submit them to Mr. Littlefield as well so the projects can be considered for a capital improvement projects (CIP) list.
- The CIP list should include our area plus state roads that lead to us.

Chugiak/Eagle River Advisory Board – Julie Jessen – Nothing to report.

School Board Report - Pat Higgins, Anchorage School Board

Higgins_Pat@asdk12.org, 907-952-5871

Mr. Higgins provided the following update:

- Budget forecast was in the news. Funding from state has been flat since 2010 and is going down. Municipal funding is already at its maximum level for local government; same since 2017. Considering inflationary factors, we have \$70M less funding. Federal funds have been used to maintain our budget.
- We are approaching a fiscal cliff. Will state continue to reduce funding to the schools?
- Federal funds are available to compensate for academic impact of the pandemic (e.g. students catching up after online classes). In the past, we've increased class size when funding was short. Our students' academic achievements are already problematic.
- Teacher's union contract is in mediation. There are many vacancies for teachers and substitute teachers.
- Funding for police officers in the schools was approved. The presence of school resource officers (SROs) had a positive impact when a fight broke out at West High School recently.
- Counselors are needed to identify students at risk.
- Deena Bishop, superintendent, contract ends on June 30, 2022. Search for replacement is underway. Committees have been formed that include educators and public representatives to participate in the selection process. There will probably be a public forum with the final three candidates, as has been done in the past. We hope to have someone in place by April. A national search is underway. There are some viable internal candidates as well.

Eagle River Valley Community Council

December 8, 2021

Page 5

- This year's school bond will be for slightly more than is being retired. We have a lot of deferred maintenance that must be addressed. All roofs are being replaced. Some intercom systems must be replaced.
- The role of the school board is changing to be much more active and listening to the public. The board is responsible for many things that the superintendent has taken over in the past.

Questions posed to Mr. Higgins included:

- Were bus drivers paid while in-person school was cancelled? Yes, federal funds were used to keep paying bus drivers; this helped ensure drivers would be available when school re-started.
- What is status of mask mandate for children in school since city mandate has ended? The board is looking for professional input on this. Masks are required in school but not when outside for recess or at lunch.
- It appears a \$67M deficit has accumulated over the past 5 years. Where did funds come from and why did overspending continue? The school district cannot run a deficit. There is a reserve fund that can be tapped. The reserve levels have changed but no deficit. The deficit will occur due to end of federal funding for teachers and reduced state funding for schools.

Education: Open position – See School Board report.

Federation of Community Councils – Tom Freeman

Mr. Freeman provided the following update:

- The Anchorage School District does allow public meetings to be held in school facilities but use of masks and social distancing is required.
- Assembly districts are updated every ten (10) years. Proposition 12 (last April) changed from 5 and ½ districts to 6 equal districts.
- A municipal budget work session was held regarding continued funding for school resource officers and the use of alcohol tax funds.
- There was a review of Chapter 28, election laws.
- Under the Anchorage Charter, the control of the Assembly chamber and all municipal buildings is the responsibility of the executive branch (mayor).
- Ms. Allard provided the following additional comments:
 - The Assembly protocols have changed substantially. Her microphone has been cut; people have been removed from the chamber. Ms. Allard personally feels there is not a security issue at the Assembly and these actions are unwarranted.
 - Ms. Allard disagrees with funding the SROs at schools since taxpayers already fund these officers. This is "double-dipping" the taxpayers to have the school district receive funds for them as well.

Parks and Rec: Pete Panarese

Mr. Panarese provided the following update:

- Parks and Rec. Board does not meet until next Monday night. The chief topic will be a discussion with the Director about the 2022 Parks budget, CIP, Ops and Fund Balance Account.

Platting: Pete Panarese – nothing to report

Meeting adjourned at 8:12pm.

Next meeting is on January 12, 2022 6:30pm via Zoom.

ERVCC Board Members (Term Expiration) President: Julie Jessen (2022); Vice President: open (2022); Treasurer: Ruth Armstrong (2022); Education: open; Parks & Rec: Pete Panarese/Ruth Armstrong - Alt (2023); C/ER Advisory Board: Julie Jessen (2022); Platting: Pete Panarese (2023); Federation of Community Councils (FCC): Tom Freeman (2023)/Alt: open; Road Board: James McCurtain (2022)/Arlene Rasic – Alt (2022); Secretary: Joy Webb (2022)