

Eagle River Valley Community Council Meeting
Wednesday, March 8, 2023 6:30pm
REGULAR MEETING
Alpenglow Elementary School
MEETING MINUTES – Approved April 12, 2023

Call to order at 6:37pm by Julie Jessen. Quorum was established.

Webpage: [Federation of Community Councils](#)

Meeting documents are here: <http://www.communitycouncils.org/servlet/viewfolder?id=4549>

Introductions and Announcements

Mr. Jim Arlington introduced himself as candidate for Anchorage Assembly Seat C. See AlaskansForArlington.com.

Approve Minutes: Motion to approve January 11, 2023 and February 8, 2023 meeting minutes by Tom Freeman; seconded by Tom Roth. Approved by unanimous vote.

Representatives' Reports

AK Senator Kelly Merrick - No report

Assembly Report – Kevin Cross (written)

- On March 7 the Assembly approved AO2320, granting four (4) weeks paternity leave benefit for municipal employees, to make municipal employment a more attractive option.
- Boards and commissions seat updates are almost finished. Ms. Joy Webb requested Ms. Crystal Kennedy's assistance in working with municipality on this issue as she has received no response on multiple requests.
- Vacant Real Property Code Enforcement, Code Enforcement Fees and Levies: Kevin and Robin are working to identify areas where Code Enforcement and reporting is creating undue hardship on property owners and expanding the rights of property owners to conduct maintenance and repairs on their own property.
- State's Base Student Allocation is still at 2017 level. One-time funding helped fill gaps but it's an ongoing issue.
- Housing is Assembly's largest concern, with increasing costs making it more difficult to attract workforce. Mr. Cross is working to streamline construction process with muni. departments and multiple organizations.

School Board Report – Carl Jacobs

- FY24 budget approved. Used one-time state allocation, COVID relief funds and funding from unfilled positions to bridge some of \$65m budget gap. To fill additional gaps, cut administrative costs by \$3M, increased student/staff ratio by 1 and restructured virtual program.
- If legislature doesn't address funding needs, deficit will be \$85M. Other school districts are also facing deficits.
- Health care costs in Alaska are very high, contributing to shortfall.
- Moving 6th graders to middle schools was approved. There will be a two-year transition plan.
- Lottery remains open a few more days for admission to charter schools.
- \$37.5M school bond proposition for April election focuses on academics and safety; much lower than \$111M bond that failed last year. \$110M in bonds have been retired in past 10 years. Have \$930M deferred maintenance budget. Transportation funding has also remained static, leading to bus driver retention issues.

Questions for Mr. Jacobs included:

- Disappointed that 6th graders are moving to middle schools. This will cause overcrowding in Gruening Middle School; impacts children who can currently walk to elementary school but will now require bussing; emptying elementary schools. Response: will need to re-draw boundaries between Gruening and Mirror Lake Middle Schools; bussing will be an issue in Eagle River; historically our 6th graders have performed better when attending middle school; more electives and advanced math available.
- Where can school-level proficiency rates be found? Should be in ASDK12 website on data dashboard-will confirm that it is available there.
- School bonds were to be offered every other year. With last year's failed bond, offering one again this year. School board has returned to annual bonds, offered in smaller, more targeted amounts.
- Schools have communicated to parents that school libraries are structurally safe, following recent inspections.

New Business:

AFD/APD/Office of Emergency Management – Will be invited to attend our May meeting regarding fire planning.

- Nixle program is no longer available in municipality for emergency alerts and safety notifications; replaced by Rave. <https://www.muni.org/departments/mayor/pressreleases/Pages/Municipality-of-Anchorage-Announces-Rave-Mobile-Safety-to-Keep-Community-Informed-During-Emergency-Situations-.aspx>
- At recent Rotary Club meeting, AFD recommended downloading PulsePoint app for out of hospital cardiac arrest.

Girdwood against the public lands disposal of Holtan Hills

Grace Pleasants, grace.pleasants@gmail.com 907.229.5418, David Nyman

- Visiting all community councils and requesting support regarding Anchorage Assembly's recent approval for development of public lands without adequate transparency and good faith consideration of community input. Twenty-two (22) councils have provided supporting resolutions thus far.
- Assembly Rep. Kevin Cross addressed this last month and reported that Assembly has tabled the Holton Hills development indefinitely, essentially 'killing' the project but Girdwood representatives were told by Heritage Land Bank/CY Investments that they are still working on the project.
- Girdwood's Resolution and sample community council support resolutions were read aloud. (See documents link)

Questions included:

- Assembly voted to table this. What would resolution of support accomplish? Encourage others to re-visit the process and follow it to engage with community.
- What is new working group in Girdwood doing? Updating Girdwood area plan to be code-compliant. Trying to update Crow Creek Master Plan (off-grid neighborhood) which Holton Hills proposal used.
- Eagle River has experienced situation where we thought we were getting one type of development and final result was different. Our Assembly reps have been routinely out-voted.
- Should we invite HLB and CY Investments to attend an ERVCC meeting to present their side? Ms. Julie Jessen will reach out and invite them to future meeting and will draft a resolution supporting transparency and community involvement in the community planning process.
- Mr. Tom Freeman invited them to attend a future Federation of Community Councils meeting to request support.

Community Wildfire Egress Project/ CERT - Art Skoog/ Julie Jessen (Institute for Social and Economic Research)

- Wildfire Egress report is still under development.
- Had four (4) sign up to join an ad hoc CERT committee. Meeting will be March 15, 5:00pm at ER Library.

Traffic concerns near Mile High Trail Head

Colin Irish, Alexander Rosales

- Speeding is an issue near trailhead. Many young families live in area now. Speed bump installation?
- Muni. does not usually support speed bumps due to emergency vehicle and plowing concerns.
- First step is to request traffic study of the area. Resolution proposed to request traffic studies for upper part of Stewart Drive and for Eagle River Lane. Resolutions will be drafted for presentation at April meeting.

Resolution recognizing service by David W. Schade (see documents links above)

- Draft resolution recognizing David W. Schade's service was read aloud and approved by unanimous vote.

US Postal Service Issues in Eagle River

Karen Franke-Helton

Ms. Franke-Helton provide the following comments:

- Service by Post Office was very problematic this winter with hours-long wait at post office to pick up mail.
- ER Post office was built in early '80s and needs updates to meet current population and demand.

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- Amazon warehouse was backed up with packages that could not be delivered due to lack of space in ER.
- Post office parking lot was poorly plowed contributing to problems.
- Packages are no longer being delivered to door.
- Contact the following officials to request improvements to our post office and postal service:
Bret.A.Sisco@usps.gov (head of operations over ER), 907-261-5470, 907-261-5471
John Craig, Anchorage Postmaster – Spenard Rd at 601. W. 36th Ave, 907-258-6733
Senator Dan Sullivan, Senator Lisa Murkowski, US Rep Mary Peltols- see their websites.

Old Business:

Eagle River Community Patrol - Cliff Cook

- Patrols conducted for 12.5 hours covering 82 miles.
- Mail theft is still occurring including prying open cluster boxes. Report all mail theft to postal inspector.
- Be bear aware and watch for moose.
- Report all crime. Let Assembly reps know we need more APD coverage than 3 officers.

Committee Reports:

CBERRRSA (Road Board) – Crystal Kennedy

- Mill rate was raised 0.1 point to 2.0. Unlike Anchorage, we don't bond for streets maintenance. We adjust mill rate to cover costs.
- We've received revenue from our snow dump site; \$100,000 last year with more expected for 2023.
- Approved Capital Improvement Projects List includes projects on Trail Bay, Denaina, Mountain Point, Prudhoe Bay, W. Skyline Drive mailboxes, Driftwood Bay trailway, D Lane, Sweetwater, Birch & Driftwood Bay, Meadow Park & Driftwood Bay and Ptarmigan (school safety).

Chugiak/Eagle River Advisory Board - Julie Jessen – has not met recently.

Education - Tom Roth

- Abbott Elementary is only school being closed this year. Expect school closures to be a topic again next year.
- See School Board report above.

Federation of Community Councils - Tom Freeman

- Title 21 updates were approved to ease process for builders and adjust timeline.
- Alcohol permitting process has been modified.
- April 10 election will include an Anchorage Parks bond and a ballot item to create a Chugiak State Park Service Area. This Service Area could be used to fund future improvements.
- FCC's Mr. Mark Butler outlined process for changing community council by-laws. The ordinance (found on FCC site under Governing Documents) must be followed. Changes are submitted via email and upon confirmation that process was properly followed, Mr. Butler will submit the changes for Assembly approval.
- Ballots for spring elections will be mailed March 13 and are due April 14.

Chugiak/Eagle River Parks and Rec Board - Ruth Armstrong

- Transfer of funds requested by board from General Fund for 2023 Operations and CIP budget has been postponed indefinitely by the Assembly.
- CIP project list included \$60,000 to add to Chugiak Baseball Park improvements but is on hold, lacking funding.
- Multi-use trail at Beach Lake crosses Chugiak Dog Musher Trail. Musers have reduced use due to risk of collisions between hikers and dog teams. Cost for two-layer trail crossing (tunnel or bridge) is cost-prohibitive. More work to be done to resolve this conflict.

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- Applications for board positions for Ruth Armstrong and Mark Littlefield have been submitted. Parks office is probably not working on having these approved due to recent employee changes.
- Motion by Ms. Joy Webb, seconded by Ruth Armstrong to draft resolution recognizing Mr. Pete Panarese for many years of service to our community on Chugiak-Eagle River Parks and Recreation Board and in support of recreational opportunities in our community. Approved by unanimous vote.

Platting - Pete Panarese – Nothing to report.

Motion to adjourn at 8:42pm.

Next meeting April 12, 6:30pm at Alpenglow Elementary School, Multi-purpose room.

ERVCC Board Members (Term Expiration) President: Julie Jessen (2023); Vice President: Tom Roth(2023); Treasurer: Ruth Armstrong (2023); Education: Tom Roth(2023); Parks & Rec: Ruth Armstrong(2026)/Mark Littlefield(2026); C/ER Advisory Board: Julie Jessen (2023)/Jared Goecker-Alt(2025); Platting: Pete Panarese (2023); Federation of Community Councils (FCC): Tom Freeman (2023)/Erik Gunderson-Alt (2025); Road Board: Crystal Kennedy (2025)/Arlene Rasic–Alt (2025); Secretary: Joy Webb (2023)