

Eagle River Valley Community Council Meeting  
Wednesday, September 13, 2023 6:30pm  
REGULAR MEETING  
Alpenglow Elementary School  
MEETING MINUTES – Approved October 11, 2023

Call to order by Julie Jessen. Quorum was established.

Webpage: Federation of Community Councils

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

**Approve Minutes:** Motion to approve May 10, 2023 meeting minutes by Art Skoog; seconded by Pete Panarese. Approved by unanimous vote.

### **Representatives' Reports**

#### **AK Senator Kelly Merrick**

- The legislature provided funds to repair Eklutna lakeside trail.
- Bipartisan efforts in Juneau included funds to repair Starnier bridge in Chugiak and support the Eagle River cemetery, but those projects were vetoed by the Governor. She will try to include them in the capital budget next session.
- DOT&PF and MOA are trying to come up with a plan to move forward on Artillery Road interchange improvements.
- She is holding a coffee with constituents on September 23 from 9-11 at Jitters.

**AK Representative Jamie Allard** – No report

#### **Anchorage Assembly Report - Kevin Cross**

- It is MOA budget season. There is a fund balance for 2023 due to job vacancies, funds will be moved to the 2024 budget with a priority of increasing wages and retaining staff. The police fleet is also in need of updating.
- Kevin is now serving as an MOA representative on Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS, the metropolitan planning organization for the Anchorage Bowl and Chugiak/Eagle River). He is also advocating to put Artillery Road improvements as a higher priority on DOT&PF's Statewide Transportation Improvements Program (STIP, through DOT&PF). He reminded people that AMATS Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and STIP are prioritized based on public comment and Eagle River doesn't participate enough. Comments on the MTP update are due October 9.
- Approximately \$6 million is available for Artillery Road. DOT&PF and MOA want to start fixing other connected issues before they're ready to fix the overpass. Project is estimated at \$47-50 million.

**School Board Report – Andy Holleman** – No report

### **New Business:**

#### **West Beach Lake Multi-Use Trail Update**

Lucy Wittlinger, Park Planner | 907.215.8516

Huddle, [lucy@huddleAK.com](mailto:lucy@huddleAK.com)

- Jeff Urbanus was introduced as new ER/Chugiak Parks Director.
- West Beach Lake multi-use trail in Birchwood has received additional funding and the scope has been expanded. Phase 1, Knik Arm to Blackburn Road is underway. Phase 2, to connect to Chugiak High School, is not yet funded but the design is going to the Urban Design Commission for approval on October 4. The trail will be a year-round, groomed, non-motorized 8' wide gravel path with a 12' clearing. Mushing trails will be realigned to avoid disruption. These will be 8'-10' wide. There will still be one at-grade trail intersection, and the design is proposing using a chicane to slow down trail users prior to meeting the mushing trail. One possibility is to use a gate to open use during summer months, then close in winter to minimize conflicts. The trail terminus at Knik Arm will include an overlook with the potential for Dena'ina place name signage. A public meeting will be held September 19. They requested a letter of support for the expanded scope, which Pete will write.

### **Native Village of Eklutna**

Brenda Hewitt, Tribal Administrator, Native Village of Eklutna

[bhewitt@eklutna.org](mailto:bhewitt@eklutna.org) (907) 688-6020

- The Eklutna Community Clinic is available to everyone and includes dental and eye care services.
- NVE is working with partners to mitigate the loss of fish in Eklutna Lake/Eklutna Rier per the 1991 Fish and Wildlife Agreement on hydro dams. The hard questions involve water flows for electric generation. One proposal would restore the river to within one mile of the lake but not connect the two.
- Julie Etsy of MEA provided additional background. There are multiple alternatives to put water back into the river, ranging from \$45 to \$450 million. The question is how and how much (water). AWWU drinking water has priority. The proposal to restore river flow to the last mile is estimated to restore 82% of habitat. Costs to MEA would have to be passed on to ratepayers.
- An open house will be held in December/January. Studies, schedule, and project information can be found at <https://eklutnahydro.com>.

### **Wildfire and Egress Report Update**

Jennifer Schmidt, Associate Professor of Natural Resource Management and Policy

Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) University of Alaska Anchorage

ISER website: <https://iseralaska.org/> Work website: <https://sites.google.com/alaska.edu/jenschmidt/home>

Office Phone: 907-786-5497

- Dr. Schmidt recently completed a Wildfire and Egress Study in preparation for an update to the MOA Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) last updated in 2008. The MOA is not able to receive funding for fuel mitigation efforts or other projects until the plan is updated. (See presentation using Meeting Documents link above.)
- Dr. Schmidt's project looked at where people are vulnerable to wildfires and where can the situation be improved. Fire weather is getting more extreme, and it just takes a few bad fire weather days for wildfires to take hold. She has developed a wildfire app, [MOA Wildfire Exposure 2014 \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com) to show areas with the potential for wildfires to happen, including areas where embers could fly. She emphasized the need for individual property owners to make their properties Firewise as much as possible. Fall is the perfect time – where leaves gather is where embers will gather. The MOA is trying to get funds to support Firewise mitigation efforts.
- Dr. Schmidt's mapping looked at areas of highest exposure and roads that would benefit from thinning, changes of gradients and softened curves (for access). AMATS is looking at road improvements based on the mapping. AFD also doesn't have sufficient gear for wildland fire fighting.
- Her work looked at where people should go for evacuation, and some locations – such as Ravenwood Elementary – wouldn't serve the population size necessary if ERV needed to evacuate. She asked: where else can we go if we need to get to shelter.
- She also supported a phone tree to reach out to neighbors and installing signs on Eagle River Road to notify people they are leaving the MOA's fire service area.
- Fortunately, the MOA has received \$4 million to update the CWPP and the project will go out for bid shortly.

### **Lions Club Liquor License Renewal, Three Bears Liquor License Application – no comments**

### **Homelessness Task Force Update**

Ken McCarty

- A number of the task force meetings have been rescheduled or cancelled.
- The focus has changed from what is the criteria to enter a shelter to what does a shelter looks like. One idea was to use JBER (donated?) modular structures, but federal regulations limit how many people can be housed in that type of structure.
- Ken is advocating for an exit plan as part of the recommendations – how to reduce shelter services as need goes down.

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- The next meeting will be September 20.
- In the meantime, the Assembly approved the Administration to study the possibility of using the old Solid Waste Service administration building for shelter and authorized funds to a local land trust to purchase and rehabilitate abandoned buildings for housing.

### **ERVCC By-Laws review and revisions** (See Meeting docs link above: Bylaws)

Crystal Kennedy, Julie Jessen

- Moved to approve as edited with the addition of striking the Capital Improvements Committee by Pete, seconded by Tom Roth.
- Mark Littlefield shared that any capital improvements would go through CERRRSA or Parks and Rec so there is no need to have a separate committee.
- No additional discussion on the matter, approved unanimously.
- Cliff Cook shared that there may be an FCC requirement for the treasurer position. Crystal/Julie will confirm prior to October meeting.

### **Emergency Preparedness**

Dean Cox

- CERT members are lightly trained citizens who volunteer to respond in case of emergency.
- CERT procedures have been drafted and will be shared at the next ERVCC meeting – ERVCC would be sponsoring body.
- FEMA CERT training (approximately 24 hours over three days) requires 8-10 participants. One person will serve as lead to coordinate with official response commander. No funding is available.

### **Eagle River Valley Community Council Elections**

- Open one-year officer positions: Treasurer (Ruth Armstrong-incumbent)
- Capital Improvements position – Mark Littlefield expressed interest in this position.
- Federation of Community Councils – Alternate position (open)
- Treasurer and capital improvements positions eliminated with bylaws update. No volunteers for FCC alternate.

### **2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan**

The DRAFT 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan has been released for a 60-day public comment period through October 9, 2023. Please visit [https://publicinput.com/2050\\_mtp](https://publicinput.com/2050_mtp) to review the plan, related planning documents and an interactive map of recommended projects. Send your comments using one of the following options:

- Leave a comment on the MTP webpage [https://publicinput.com/2050\\_mtp](https://publicinput.com/2050_mtp)
- Email your comments to: [2050\\_mtp@PublicInput.com](mailto:2050_mtp@PublicInput.com)
- Record a voicemail with your comments at 855-925-2801, project coe 5397
- Send your comments by mail to Permit & Development Center, 4700 Elmore Rd, PO Box 196650, Anchorage, AK 99516-6650.
- All are encouraged to provide feedback.

### **Capital Improvement Plan for the MOA**

- Survey list: <https://www.muni.org/communitycouncilsurveys/homepage/>
- Mayor's request for updates:  
<https://www.muni.org/communitycouncilsurveys/homepage/media/mayorletters/2023-mayor-letter.pdf>
- All are encouraged to provide feedback.

Old Business:

### **Eagle River Community Patrol - Cliff Cook**

- Patrols conducted for 56 hours covering 441 miles.

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- Community Patrol supported Grad Blast and Bear Paw Festival.
- We are seeing more vandalism in the area – report vandalism to 311.
- Report all crime to APD on 311 (or 911 if emergency).

**Committee Reports:**

**CBERRRSA (Road Board) – Crystal Kennedy**

CBERRRSA Report on 8/28/23 regular meeting, from Crystal Kennedy 9/10/23

- Summer maintenance projects are wrapping up. Fall road sweeping began on September 1st.
- CBERRRSA delayed three projects until next year (Dee Lane, Sweet Water, and Prudhoe Bay) and added five projects that needed immediate remediation this year ( War Admiral, Ptarmigan, Glacier View, Upper Terrace and Knik Vista).
- A great deal of attention has been given recently to legal challenges and materials shortages for replacing Starner Bridge and providing public access to Aurora Borealis (Birchwood Community Council). Negotiations for the public access is on-going and CBERRRSA expects to have a path forward very shortly. Materials shortages have delayed the lift station on Breckenridge (Eagle River Community Council) and that project has been pushed into the 2024 construction season. Falling Water Creek culvert replacement has also been pushed into 2024 but design is 100% complete and ready to put out to bid.
- CBERRRSA is taking suggestions/ recommendations for local 2024 Capital Improvement Projects List. Please email or call the Street Maintenance office as soon as possible so a cost analysis can be done on any potential projects.
- The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) ([www.amats2050.com](http://www.amats2050.com)) draft is currently available for public review and comment. There are several items on their list that are worth commenting on and those comments need to be submitted, through the AMATS website, by Oct. 9th. One noteworthy item that has been very important to the community, the Artillery Road interchange, has fallen significantly in the AMATS rankings while an entirely new project to reduce the Old Glenn through Eagle River down to two lanes, adding additional bike lanes and pedestrian crossings, has been added and prioritized above the Artillery Road project. Now is the time to review the draft and to comment. Below is a summary of some of the projects from the list of about 200 Muni-wide projects that are in our community council area or would impact our council's residents.
  - 11 - Eagle River Road - Rehabilitate approximately 6 miles of Eagle River Road from MP 0.0 to 5.3 to add turn lanes. Project would include non-motorized improvements and consider adjacent land use.
  - 51 - Hiland Road/ Glenn Hwy - Reconstruct the Glenn Highway Interchange at Hiland Road. Make necessary non-motorized improvements including connection of the Glenn Highway pathway. Evaluate the need for a two lane on ramp from Hiland Road Interchanges to the weigh station. Project would consider adjacent land use.
  - 98 - Old Glenn Hwy (Downtown Eagle River) Project would rehabilitate Old Glenn Highway from Eagle River Loop Road to North Eagle River Access Road to reduce lanes (from 4-2), slow speeds, add additional non-motorized crossing options, and add bike infrastructure where possible.
  - 152- Artillery Road Interchange - Project would reconstruct the Artillery Road interchange, including lengthening the southbound on ramp and the intersection of Old Glenn Highway and Eagle River Road near the Artillery interchange to accommodate turning traffic from Eagle River Road.
  - 179 - Citation Road - Project would rehabilitate Citation Road from Eagle River Loop Road to Eagle River Lane to current collector standards. Project would include non-motorized infrastructure, drainage, and lighting.
- The CBERRRSA Board meets the last Monday of each month so the next meeting is Sept. 25th. As always, please feel free to call the Street Maintenance office directly for any concerns, 907-343-1510.

**Chugiak/Eagle River Advisory Board - Julie Jessen** – no meetings held.

**Education - Tom Roth**

- School now starts 1 hour later Mondays to allow elementary teachers to become familiar with new curriculum. Starting next year, school will start in new order: Elementary, Middle, High School. Studies have shown high school students do better with later starts while elementary students are better starting earlier in the day.
- No projection on school closures in ER, but ASD board will be revisiting capacity district wide.

**Federation of Community Councils - Tom Freeman**

- Meeting next week.
- FCC contract was renewed by the Assembly.

**Chugiak/Eagle River Parks and Rec Board - Ruth Armstrong, Mark Littlefield**

- Budget season.
- The pool is out for bidding this fall; a new operating contract/bid process will be issued in the next few months.

**Platting - Pete Panarese** – Nothing to report.

- Eklutna Inc replat at Eklund/Prudhoe Bay approved.

**Next Meeting October 11, 6:30pm at Alpenglow Elementary School, 19201 Driftwood Bay Dr, Eagle River.**

ERVCC Board Members (Term Expiration) President: Julie Jessen (2024); Vice President: Tom Roth(2024); Treasurer: Ruth Armstrong (2023); Education: Tom Roth(2024); Parks & Rec: Ruth Armstrong(2026)/Mark Littlefield(2026); C/ER Advisory Board: Julie Jessen (2023)/Jared Goecker-Alt(2025); Platting: Pete Panarese (2024); Federation of Community Councils (FCC): Tom Freeman (2024)/ Alt-Vacant (2025); Road Board: Crystal Kennedy (2025)/Arlene Rasic–Alt (2024); Secretary: Joy Webb (2024)