

Spenard Community Council Minutes

October 1, 2008 7:05 PM, Spenard Recreation Center

1. Approval of Minutes & Agenda

Minutes: Minutes were approved after editing correction of a wayward “cut and paste”.

Agenda: Agenda was approved as amended by the deletion of items 5a Woodland Park name change and 5c APD SARA Project discussion; both to be scheduled for the November meeting. Northwest Park District Manager Jeff Matthis’ Parks Report Card was inserted as new 5a. Russ Oswald, Muni project manager for the Northwood and 48th/Van Buren/Harding projects will be 5c.

2. Announcements

Matt Burkholder and Jim Bowers requested that people identify themselves when they are first speaking; it really helps the note taking for the minutes.

3. Legislative Report

Representative Doogan’s aide Pria ____ was present to respond to questions, comments. Jason Bergerson commented that the election will be the day before our next meeting. Was there interest in an interim meeting with candidates or is there another forum to hear candidates? Pria suggested tuning into KAKM October 20th for the televised debates.

5. Local Projects & Discussion

a. Jeff Matthis informed us that the Parks & Recreation has forms for interested people to grade the condition of small parks; there are 33 in this area. The forms are sent to an institute at Indiana University for analysis and rating. There is also a second Asset Management team of engineers and maintenance staff that reviews the comments to decide where and how to spend money on parks. They also do their own inspection and rating of safety and maintenance cost issues. Please – input is requested within the week to be included in the survey. Discussion included how the city rates park condition, how to fill out the form (turn it in at the Rec. center desk), encroachment of private individuals’ property into parks (include on report card, but also call Jeff right away & he’ll look into it), the form is available online – but can’t be filled out on line, Chester Park nature trail isn’t on the list but can be included in report, encroachment onto and theft from Wilson Park, graffiti (call graffiti busters or Jeff).

b. Ed O’Neill of Brown Jug Liquor is selling the retail operations to Canadian publicly traded Liquor Stores USA North, Inc. Ed informed the Council that he thinks the new owners will continue the community minded and responsible approach that he has taken over the years. He also talked about ARBRA - Anchorage Responsible Beverage Retailers Association, Inc – the positive actions it’s taken in the past and Ed’s current plans for turning the original Anchorage Townsite into a campsite.

Ed asked for the Council’s support for the transfer of the Brown Jug licenses to the new owners. Members of the council spoke in support of Ed and voiced appreciation for his approach in dealing with the community, homeless, public inebriates etc.

Ed also spoke in support of Title 47 as an approach to dealing with the public inebriate problem. A motion was made (Jason B, 2nd Jim B) and passed to forward a letter of no objection to the Municipality License Clerk.

6. Committee Reports

a. Planning & Zoning Committee

Matt B, Jason B and Peggy Auth discussed the pending Faith Community Christian Church Development and development along the Arctic corridor (7 hotels!?!) in general. The council is frustrated and bewildered by the apparent lack of coordination amongst Planning, Transportation and Zoning entities when considering the cumulative impact of multiple developments on adjacent neighborhoods. Apparent reluctance to respond effectively to reported code violations has been an ongoing source of frustration for years. It seems that pursuing the issues through Assembly representatives Matt Claman and Harriet Drummond is the avenue to try next; P&Z committee and others interested will try to arrange a meeting. The conversation and the arrival of Russ Oswald led to ...

5. Local Projects & Discussion

c. Russ Oswald started with a status review of the 48th/Van Buren project as of his last appearance before the council: American Fast Freight has told the Muni to direct all correspondence through their lawyers. Russ believes that they do not want the project to advance in phases and are blocking it until it can be done all in one phase. Russ acknowledged responsibility in not having the land swap bond required for Phase II on the last election's ballot. Russ says the Jeff Gregory of Sourdough is being cooperative in advancing the project. AFF is the hold up. Design for the project is proceeding.

- Alan Thornhill repeatedly asked what many in the council don't understand - why Phase I couldn't proceed; Phase I will make it safer for pedestrians and residential traffic and AFF will still have access to 48th. Russ responded that he couldn't speak for or run AFF's activities, but proceeding with Phase I is not their preference and they are now cycling their traffic and operations the way they want to.

- Jim B offered that was salt in the wound. Coming to the meeting tonight he looked down Van Buren and saw AFF tractors, trailers and tugs using the soccer field parking lot as a staging area. De facto AFF already has expanded onto Muni property; they already have their half of the land swap. Russ replied that he forwarded that complaint to ROW Lynn McGee a couple of months ago and hasn't heard back. Russ will follow up with Lynn and Jack Frost (head of ROW) tomorrow.

- Peggy Auth asked about construction in progress on the south end trucking property – what is it and is it encroaching onto ROW? Also, Peggy complained that when she and her husband are walking down Van Buren they feel intimidated by AFF's activities and employees. They feel as if AFF is regarding them as trespassers even though they are on public land. Russ acknowledged that AFF has that attitude; he encountered it when he brought up the issue the last time he was talking to the president of AFF. Now Russ is reluctant to take further action because he fears it will make future dealings more contentious. Blocking off AFF's use of the soccer field parking area is legitimate, though, and he has raised the possibility to both ROW and Mike Abbott.

- Jason B. noted that funding for Phase II isn't on the CIP list; can we be assured that it will be added after the land swap is approved? Russ doesn't know the particulars; he will

follow up w/ Jim Lamson. Right now Russ has over half the construction funding available for project. What they don't have is funding for land acquisition for Sourdough. Jason related that he, Sam O'Connor and Alan had met in the Mayor's office and had a handshake deal with AFF for an equitable land swap and the project would progress. Now, Jason is in favor of staking out the land swap, give AFF an eight foot ROW and move on. We've been lied to for three years now. Russ will bring it up with Mike Abbott tomorrow.

- Alan asked Russ if he had a traffic count of AFF's activity. Without having exact figures available, they agreed that it was probably more than 400 from Sunday to Wednesday.
- Russ on Northwood: Skateboard deterrents have been installed on the retaining wall and steps at Aspen. Drainage issues have been resolved. Fences have been repaired or replaced. The only outstanding issue is the raised cross walk at Aspen: Russ's opinion is the in pavement lighting has been a failure, but they are going to shim up the lights and try them for one more season. City crews will wire them in with the overhead lights so both systems can be activated by the push button. Questions?
- Peggy A. questioned the quality of the landscaping, seeding and introduction of weeds. Russ will follow up with Isobel Roy tomorrow and will try to set up a meeting/site visit. Jim B suggested investigating topsoil instead of/in addition to the seed supplier.
- Annmaria Umholtz stated that without presence of a crossing guard, the raised cross walk's lights are ineffective and dangerous. Russ agreed.
- Jim B. raised the issue of the Northwood/48th intersection, confirming that the idea of a raised concrete intersection has not been abandoned; it is still under consideration. Russ affirmed that. Steve Noble (DOWL) and the Muni maintenance department are leaving it for one more season and then will decide what to do. The idea is dormant, not dead. Russ has found that chokers and paint have been more effective in slowing traffic than table intersections.
- Russ: the curve at Tudor and Harding was widened again, citing safety concerns for trucks hauling doubles.
- Annmaria restated that the intersection tables were effective in slowing traffic. Russ agreed but said that because of the grades on Northwood they were not as effective and were more costly because they required more catch basins (\$5K) and manholes (\$10K).
- Peggy A. asked about manhole cover grades, especially those on 45th. Russ will follow up.
- Other projects: turn lanes at 36th and C, Tudor and Elmore.

7. Old and New Business

a. Ron Berger reported on the Players' House of Rock situation: Activities the past month were a little bit slower, probably due to weather, but were essentially the same as before. Traffic control was instituted that creates its own nuisance with flashing lights, cones across driveways etc. Eileen Zaiser volunteered that things are a little better than before (no sex in her driveway) five nights a week, but on Friday and Saturday nights the boom box noise is intolerable from about 2:00 to 5:00 AM. Ron agreed. Eileen says that she observes that Players parking lot might be only 1/3 full at 11:00 PM but the traffic really comes in at closing time. The new traffic pattern results in more traffic having to turn around in her driveway.

- Jason B: Players' parking permit/traffic control was dated after the Council's last meeting, although Players claimed that they had already instituted positive changes. They never approached the Council before hand. Jason recommended a resolution asking that the traffic permit be rescinded and that their liquor license not be renewed in December. Alan T. offered that the problems started with the special condition allowing the extended hours restaurant and that that should be rescinded. Again, Players had not approached the Council. Ron B. noted that last month Matt Claman said that he had been misled, he was unaware that Players had not been in contact with the council or community and he had not anticipated that a whole new crowd of people would show up at Players at 2:30 AM. After Matt B asked if pursuing revocation of the special limitation allowing the after hours restaurant would provide the quickest relief, Jason proposed a resolution with a multi-faceted approach based on Players misrepresentation that they had worked with the council and the community: 1) approach the Assembly to suspend the special condition allowing the after hours operations until the Assembly can reconsider the case. 2) Approach the Traffic Department to rescind the Special Activity Permit (the traffic/parking plan). (At this point Carolyn Wolski observed that the Permit showed that Players' liability insurance expired on September 14th, one more cause for revocation. Ron Berger displayed a shell casing he picked up in his driveway.) 3) Approach the Assembly recommending non renewal of Players' liquor license in December.

-Harriet Drummond arrived at this point: Last night she announced notice of intent to move for rescission of the Assembly action on May 20th allowing the after hours restaurant. Assembly and municipality attorneys are now involved investigating the situation and how it came to be. Harriet asked the neighbors and Council to ask the Chief of Police for a Public Safety Meeting. A discussion about noise and potential of delaying emergency vehicles followed. Jason reminded the meeting that there was a motion on the floor, and that Harriet's suggestion of 4) The Chief of Police should be approached for a Public Safety Meeting could be included. Several seconds were heard. Harriet read an e-mail from Assembly Council Julia Tucker recommending how to proceed. Clarification requested by Bob Auth: protest of liquor license? Jason: affirmative. Question from the floor – were the owners of Players invited to be here tonight? Matt B: affirmative. Harriet recommends the neighbors request a Public Safety Meeting separate from the Council's motions. Jim B stated that he wanted this discussion to include recognition of the positive manner that Ron Berger was approaching the situation and the Council – in stark contrast to that of the owner of the Players, who last meeting, even when asked, refused to sign in to the meeting and did not identify themselves when speaking. Matt B called for a vote on the motion (#1- #4 underlined above) which passed unanimously.

A discussion ensued about how to proceed about notifying the media, the owners etc. The consensus was to wait until our process is a little further along. Also, the importance of numbers and calm consistency was stressed. And please join the Council.

7b. Mark Butler reported that Quick Tow is being purchased, vacated by June 1, 2009 to advance the Spenard Rd safety project. A discussion about safety issues, public parking etc. followed.

4. Assembly Report

Harriet Drummond: Harriet wants input about the needs for traffic calming. Requests have to come from residents, but Harriet will pass them along to the Traffic Department. There will be coordination with our state representatives.

-September 16th meeting: the assembly passed a resolution withdrawing support for the Knik Arm Bridge project. Chapter 5 of Title 21 passed; it concerns land use based on zoning and adjacent zoning.

- September 30th the mayor reported the new convention center is opening on time, on budget. Chapter 6, concerning dimensional standards, of Title 21 passed. Chapter 7, concerning design standards, is up next. There was a 10 year plan status update on the homeless issue. It's a big problem getting bigger. The mayor's budget was presented, but there wasn't time for discussion. And of course, there was the Players issue.

Discussion: Jason B complained about the process currently being used to maintain or update the CIP list. Pria strongly recommended the Council being involved in requests for traffic calming and any other needs/desires.

7. Old and New Business (cont)

c. Jim B asked about the status of the Spenard Recreation Center parking lot gates – are we going to get them in this year and if so, how? Jason B said that there's \$30,000 set aside with the parks foundation. After discussion, the way things are going (or not) with Russ Oswald and the 48th St project, we may have better luck putting out a stand alone project.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20