

**Huffman/O'Malley Community Council**  
*It's your HOCC!*  
**May 2009**

**E-Newsletter**

Did you attend the April Huffman/O'Malley Community Council meeting? If so, you had an opportunity to ask the DOWL engineer assigned to this project questions regarding the status of the Huffman Road Project. Construction is planned to begin this summer with the roundabout at Old Seward Highway and Huffman Road. This project will continue in 2010 with three more roundabouts at Brandon Street/Huffman Park Drive (at the Carr's intersection) and a double roundabout at New Seward Highway/Huffman Road. In addition, upgrades to Huffman have now been extended to Pintail.

You also heard updates on the Hillside District Plan (HDP), Title 21 (Land Use Code), and South Anchorage Water Improvement Project (SAWIP) and how these three projects have the potential to drastically alter our large lot, suburban residential zoning. Our Assembly Representatives Chris Birch and Jennifer Johnston discussed current Muni and Assembly events, including a possible 6% increase to our property taxes to cover the budget deficit and budget increases. The HOCC is also currently drafting a resolution to address the "rolling closures" that temporarily shut down our local fire stations in order to cut expenses due to the Muni's budget deficits.

After elections, we welcomed our new officers: Chris Monette, President; Katie Nolan, Vice President; Lori Carini, Secretary; and Melissa Schmiedt, Treasurer. Other members of the steering committee are Frank Carini, Wayne Crayton, Tami Holt, Pete Nolan, Jim Pekar, Paul Rasmussen, Mark Schroeder, Ryan Stencil, Tim Stevens, and Wayne Westberg, with George Arcand, Member Emeritus. Thank you for serving our community!

**HOT BUTTON ISSUE - HILLSIDE DISTRICT PLAN**

The Hillside District Plan (HDP) Public Hearing Draft (PHD) was to be finalized and available to the public in February, and scheduled for public hearing in March or April before the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC). The last revision of the draft issued by the consulting firm Agnew::Beck called for several changes that are of grave concern, including allowing high density housing in the "Furrow Creek Drainage" (much of the area bordered by Huffman and O'Malley from Elmore to Lake Otis). The HOCC is overwhelmingly opposed to this concept and has been since it was first mentioned by Chris Beck of the contracting firm Agnew::Beck. While our opposition was noted in the first draft, it was excluded from the current edition.

After repeated attempts, we have learned that Agnew::Beck staff that was working on the Public Hearing Draft has been assigned elsewhere and Chris Beck is working alone. He states that "the consultants, the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) and the Muni

Departments are pedaling as fast as we can", and that they are still receiving comments from the Muni Departments. Beck expects that the PHD document will be released possibly as soon as May 1st.

Beck advises that the substance of the document is virtually unchanged as of the last draft, and that what has been changed is the format. This can be interpreted to mean that all of the items HOCC opposes are intact in the Public Hearing Draft (PHD). Beck verified that his concept of rezoning the Furrow Creek Drainage area to allow high density remains unchanged.

Beck also stated that the community will be able to submit comments on the PHD to him, and that he will then create a "response document" for the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) hearing. This format is quite unusual, as a PHD is the document on which the public hearing is to be based, and comments are submitted to the PZC, not to the document's creator. If this change in the public comment process occurs, it could be problematic since concerns and issues with the hearing draft would not receive adequate attention until the PZC-approved document reaches the Assembly.

It is also disconcerting to discover that, depending on the public hearing schedule, there will be little time for adequate public response. While HOCC meets during the summer months, many other councils do not. This delay also means that we will have a new Mayor and Municipal Administration prior to public hearing. In addition, the public must come out in force to demand the retention of low density development in the Furrow Creek Drainage area in the middle of our busy summer months.

The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) met on the 23rd to discuss the Public Hearing Draft. Although the draft was not available to them, Wayne Westberg says that Chris Beck did agree to some rewording. However, it appears that the central figures in this process now seem to be Municipal departments

If you would like to contact Chris Beck of Agnew::Beck with your own request for this document, call him at 222-5424. You may also contact your Assembly representatives if you are unsatisfied with this situation, and request their assistance in airing this document, having an adequate public response time. We desire a normal public hearing process with the Planning and Zoning Commission and the ability to offer written comments, testify in person, or both. It should also be restated that the HDP was to be a community-led effort, with consultants, contractors and municipal departments available to assist us with technical work, staff assistance, and paperwork, and that the Hillside has been working on the HDP since 2003.

To see the Huffman/O'Malley Community Council response to the last draft, go to: [www.hillsidedistrictplan.com/](http://www.hillsidedistrictplan.com/). Item #3 on the main page is "full public comments"; open and go to page 112.

--Submitted by Katie Nolan

## HUFFMAN ROAD PROJECT UPDATE

The Huffman Road reconstruction will now extend further east from Lake Otis, and is now "three-projects-in-one" - the Huffman and Old Seward roundabout, the New Seward Highway and Brandon Street roundabouts with upgrades to Lake Otis Parkway, and the Lake Otis to Pintail portion. According to Steve Noble, project manager for DOWL HKM Engineers, the new section will include drainage improvements and pavement repair within the existing right-of-way (ROW). No design specifications have been developed for this new work, but the Anchorage Department of Transportation (ADOT) is in "hurry up" mode to catch up with the rest of the project. Work to begin this summer will be final design specifications and acquiring the necessary right-of-way (ROW) for the existing project including the multiple roundabouts, and construction on those is scheduled to begin in 2010. The Old Seward Highway Improvements, including the roundabout at Huffman/Old Seward, are scheduled to begin construction this summer by ADOT.

HOCC members expressed great concern that there will be no public meetings on the Lake Otis to Pintail section. Ann Brooks, DOWL's Public Involvement specialist, did mention that fliers will be mailed out to residents whose property is adjacent to the project site.

HOCC members also have concerns about the plans to include sodium vapor lighting instead of LED lamps, as retrofitting is not economical and sodium vapor will increase light pollution. Other concerns include over-designed improvements, excessive ROW clearing, adequate plans for existing poor drainage issues, and traffic flow during construction.

The major drawback to roundabouts is their removal of signal lights that could affect pedestrian safety, according to HOCC members. DOWL representatives offer the idea that roundabouts necessitate a "learning curve", both to drivers and to pedestrians. The Huffman business area sees a lot of pedestrian and bicycle traffic, and HOCC members have expressed concern that roundabouts are difficult for non-vehicular use.

DOWL representative, Steve Noble, will return to the Council meeting in June for another update, including updates on plans and specifications for the entire Huffman Road Improvement project.

--Submitted by Wayne Crayton

### **PROPERTY TAX TO INCREASE!**

Property Taxes! Although several Assembly members have offered a downsized revised budget, it looks like Anchorage may face an increase in our property taxes of 6% (or possibly more). Assembly members Jennifer Johnston and Chris Birch reported that they are working to cut the budget, and are open to suggestions. If you have any ideas, share them with Jennifer at [jjohnston@gci.net](mailto:jjohnston@gci.net) or Chris at [chrisbirch@gci.net](mailto:chrisbirch@gci.net) or attend the Assembly meeting of Tuesday, April 28. Assembly meetings are held at the Loussac Library. For more information, go to [www.muni.org](http://www.muni.org).

## **TANGLEWOOD PARK BOARDWALK UPDATE**

In 2006 our Council was asked to support a project at Bowman Elementary School along with a large number of community organizations, local businesses, and volunteers. This will be an accessible 1400-foot boardwalk that will provide both students and the entire community easy access for wildlife viewing and enjoyment of restored wetlands on Tanglewood Park, immediately adjacent to the school and golf course. We are excited that this project continues to progress with installation this spring and summer.

Additional volunteers from throughout the area and our local business community are needed to help. If you would like to participate in the final season of work on this worthy project, call teacher Linda Hulen at Bowen Elementary, 742-5600.

Submitted by Mark Schroeder

### **>>>> QUESTION OF THE MONTH <<<<**

The SAWIP (South Anchorage Water Improvement Project) is going to install a high-pressure water line along the west side of the pavement on Elmore between O'Malley and the South High roundabout. Should the Huffman/O'Malley Community Council ask for fire hydrants to be placed along this route as part of the project?

Please let us know your thoughts so we can make a community decision! Email President Christine Monette at [HOCCPresident@gmail.com](mailto:HOCCPresident@gmail.com) and vote!

### **WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!**

We had three new members join our community council at April's General Membership meeting. Thank you for helping make our community council stronger!

### **HOCC MAY MEETING**

Put the May meeting on your calendar now! It's Thursday May 21. Meetings are held at the Christian Church of Anchorage, corner of Lake Otis and O'Malley at 7 pm on the third Thursday monthly. Enter at the door on the O'Malley side of the building and head downstairs. Items to be discussed will include new information concerning the Title 21 Rewrite, and status of the SAWIP construction.

The program for the May meeting will include a representative from Fish & Game discussing Hillside's bear population. Also, Kari Sherman will discuss the Muni's rain garden program, where monies are available for residents installing these conservation measures.

*Do you or your neighbors want to become members of HOCC? Have you renewed this year?  
Has your information changed? Use this form as needed!*

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**Yes, I want to become a contributing member of HOCC.  
Enclosed is my contribution (\$5 minimum) for this year.**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Physical Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mailing Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone: (h)** \_\_\_\_\_ **(other)** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-Mail** \_\_\_\_\_

**Comments &  
Concerns:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail to: Huffman/O'Malley Community Council, PMB 420, 1120 Huffman Rd., Suite 24,  
Anchorage, AK 99515**