

Eklutna Valley Community Council
October 16, 2013
Meeting minutes

The meeting was presided over by council president Rick Sinnott and began at 7:00 p.m. The council met at the new Eklutna ranger station. Eighteen council members attended: Steve and Cheryl Remme, Skip and Tena Cheely, Heather Marks-Cheely, James Riley, Bob Reagan, Debbie and Steve Thon, Helen Bohn, Keith and Vicki Darby, Dan Thompson, Margan Grover, Randy Bangerter, Dave Vanord, and Lisa and Rick Sinnott. Tom Dreyer, with S4 Group was also present. Erin Ealum, a project assistant with Eklutna, Inc., arrived after Tom Dreyer's presentation and stayed for the rest of the meeting. Cloris Leeth, the volunteer caretaker for the Eklutna campground, also attended.

The minutes of the November 1, 2012, meeting were approved with no changes. Lisa reported \$466.64 in the council's funds.

Before the agenda items were addressed, Rick thanked Ranger Keith Wilson for allowing us to use his office for the meeting, Debbie for organizing and all those who participated in road cleanup last summer, and Skip and Tena for allowing the road cleanup crew to meet up at the ice cream stand.

Eklutna, Inc, application to rezone land between Thunder Bird and Eklutna interchanges. Tom Dreyer, representing Eklutna, Inc., described the proposal to rezone lands east of the Eklutna interchange and between the old and new Glenn highways. About 77 acres will be rezoned to I-1, 20 acres to I-2 and 12 acres (on both sides of Eklutna River) to B-3SL. An additional 10 acres near the old tavern is owned by Harry Johnson, who is also proposing to rezone the property to I-2. Eklutna, Inc., wants to build a truss plant on one of the parcels closest to the Eklutna interchange. Development on the other parcels hasn't been decided; however, I-1 and I-2 allow a wide range of uses.

Some of the members raised concerns about future plans that might be incompatible with the area, such as a landfill or outdoor shooting range. Dreyer didn't know of any such plans and agreed that many uses would be required to go through another public comment period when more details were available.

A motion was made and seconded to send a letter to Dreyer stating that our community council had no major objections to the rezoning at this time; however, we reserved our right to comment on future development plans. All but one member voted in favor of the letter. One member opposed the motion. **Rick will draft the letter and email it to council members for review.**

Eklutna River bridge update. The state has a \$14 million grant to remove the old bridge and construct a new one on the site. Engineers are working on the final design. The four options all look more or less alike from above, but the trusses and other supporting materials differ. The contract will go out for bid next year and work will begin in spring 2015. Officials hope to finish the bridge by October 2015, but unanticipated issues might delay completion until spring 2016.

Chugach State Park update. For the second year in a row high water in Eklutna Lake flooded the lakeside trail and waves caused by high winds caused severe damage to large sections of the trail. The lower trail used by walkers and cyclists was most heavily damaged, but even sections of the main trail were badly eroded, although still usable. The trail near the Bold airstrip was covered with 2-3 feet of water. The lake has subsided over the past month.

Tom Harrison, the park superintendant, has about \$20,000 in his budget to repair culverts. He planned to inspect the trail this week with representatives from FEMA, which park officials hope will provide funds for repairing the bulk of last year's damage. Repairing last year's damage will likely fix this year's damage because the same sections of trail were damaged both years.

A motion was made and seconded for the community council to send a letter to Harrison and FEMA supporting the trail repairs. **Rick will draft a letter and email it to council members for review.**

The park has been working on plans for trails and access for several years. The biggest change in the Eklutna area is a proposed non-motorized trail along the south side of the lake, making a complete loop with the existing trail. There is no funding for this trail at this time. However, the park received funding for five or six public use cabins. Two were built this summer at Bird Creek. One or two backcountry cabins may also be built on the south side of Eklutna Lake or perhaps up the East Fork of Eklutna River. If public use cabins are definitely proposed for Eklutna Lake, there will be a chance for public comment.

Council members checked out the new ranger station. Late last summer the newly landscaped lawn erupted in 12 or more species of invasive weeds, several of which hadn't been seen in Eklutna Valley before. The general contractor was told of the problem and he and his wife pulled the weeds. Some may have seeded and may return next year. Rick and Lisa have been pulling some of the worst invasive weeds, primarily white sweetclover, yellow sweetclover, and bird vetch in the campground and along Eklutna Lake Road for over five years. Considerable interest was expressed for organizing a weed-pulling day next August.

Remme's subdivision. Steve and Cheryl are subdividing their property into 10 lots of approximately 4-10 acres each. They've roughed out the access roads and soil samples have been taken. The next step is to obtain electricity to eight utility poles and drill two wells. They hope to start selling lots next summer. Anyone with questions can contact them at remme@mtaonline.net.

Repairing Eklutna Lake Road. Rick contacted Thomas Grman, the supervisor for road maintenance with the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, and gave him an opportunity to send someone to the meeting to listen to complaints. He declined, but told me he was well aware of the water seeping onto the curve on the big hill, at about Mile 3. He said it was a common problem in the municipality and they would continue to monitor it and deal with icing as it became problematic. They have also been adding gravel to the broken edges of the macadam and patched several last summer. The consensus of council members seemed to be that the corner with icing issues will be hazardous again this winter. Rick encouraged members to call Grman when the problem arose after freezing. (Thomas.Grman@alaska.gov)

Updating the community council charter. Darrel Hess, the municipal ombudsman, has reviewed all community council charters and found problems with most or all of them. Our charter needs work on “membership definition,” “minutes taken at every meeting,” “dissolution of the council,” and “Robert’s Rules apply if not in bylaws.” Many of these problems were also found in other Chugiak/Eagle River community council bylaws.

Coincidentally, the Assembly is revising the ordinance that regulates community councils. Hess recommended that we take no action on revising our charter until the Assembly passes the amended ordinance, which is likely to be in November. We will have 120 days to amend our charter and resubmit it for approval. This may necessitate a community council meeting in mid-winter.

Fee increases. The municipal planning department has proposed fee increases for land use permits, inspections, rezoning applications, platting, appeals, fines for failure to comply and other actions. If approved the increases would take effect in January 2014.

Volunteer fire training and equipment. Skip raised the issue of getting a grant for fire-suppression equipment for Eklutna Lake. Members recalled a previous investigation at least four years ago. At that time members were unwilling to commit to the ongoing training requirements (at least six were required), the necessity to have someone act as a dispatcher and monitor a phone 24 hours a day, the need for a warm garage that could be accessed by all volunteers at any time. Skip volunteered the warm garage. Because several members expressed interest, Rick volunteered to find someone to make another presentation on the issue at the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.