

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA
AR No. 2018-277, As Amended

A RESOLUTION OF THE ANCHORAGE MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLY SUPPORTING EFFORTS TO DAYLIGHT FISH CREEK, ALSO KNOWN BY THE DENA'INA PEOPLE AS CH'ATANALTSEGH LIQ'AKA BETNU, AND ENCOURAGING THE ONGOING AND FUTURE PROJECTS TO RESTORE, PROTECT AND ENHANCE DAYLIGHTING OF FISH CREEK.

1
2 **WHEREAS**, Fish Creek is located in traditional Dena'ina lands; and
3

4 **WHEREAS**, as reported in *Shem Pete's Alaska: The Territory of the Upper Cook Inlet Dena'ina*,
5 Fish Creek is known as Ch'atanaltsegh, according to Dena'ina elder Mike Alex; and
6

7 **WHEREAS**, Dena'ina elder John Stump noted that the creek mouth and tidal zone were called
8 Liq'aka Betnu; and
9

10 **WHEREAS**, the mouth of Fish Creek / Ch'atanaltsegh Liq'aka Betnu was the site of seasonal
11 Dena'ina fish camps; and
12

13 **WHEREAS**, Fish Creek / Ch'atanaltsegh Liq'aka Betnu had historic runs of salmon that have all
14 but disappeared; and
15

16 **WHEREAS**, Fish Creek / Ch'atanaltsegh Liq'aka Betnu once drained the wetlands of midtown
17 Anchorage, beginning in the area of what is now Laurel and East 42nd; and
18

19 **WHEREAS**, Fish Creek / Ch'atanaltsegh Liq'aka Betnu has been artificially altered since the
20 1950s, resulting in the diversion of 73% of its original flow underground into pipes; and
21

22 **WHEREAS**, much of its former wetlands, ponds and lakes (such as Blueberry Lake near the
23 intersection of Benson Boulevard and A Street) have been filled in the process of urbanization;
24 and
25

26 **WHEREAS**, the headwaters of Fish Creek / Ch'atanaltsegh Liq'aka Betnu are located at
27 approximately East 42nd and Laurel, and its watershed expands into the midtown Benson
28 Boulevard and New Seward Highway area; and
29

30 **WHEREAS**, Fish Creek / Ch'atanaltsegh Liq'aka Betnu is now Anchorage's most impaired
31 waterway due to high levels of fecal coliform from urban water runoff, low dissolved oxygen
32 levels due to yard waste dumping, substandard pH levels and a large amounts of litter in the
33 waterway; and
34

35 **WHEREAS**, daylighting is the process of freeing creeks from their underground pipes and
36 allowing them to run a more natural course, improving the health of the waterway and riparian
37 zones, and mitigating flooding hazards; and
38

39 **WHEREAS**, there is strong community support for restoring and daylighting Fish Creek /

1 Ch'atanaltsegh Łiq'aka Betnu, including from Friends of Fish Creek, Spenard Community
2 Council, Anchorage Waterways Council, and The Alaska Center; and
3

4 **WHEREAS**, flooding is an observed phenomenon at Fish Creek / Ch'atanaltsegh Łiq'aka Betnu,
5 and climate change has the potential to increase Anchorage rain events which pose a hazard to
6 roads, public utilities, and personal property in the watershed; and
7

8 **WHEREAS**, the Fish Creek / Ch'atanaltsegh Łiq'aka Betnu Corridor and Estuary provide
9 tremendous natural resource and recreation value within the Midtown, Turnagain and Spenard
10 Communities; and
11

12 **WHEREAS**, the recently completed and scheduled renovations of the existing Fish Creek /
13 Ch'atanaltsegh Łiq'aka Betnu Trail demonstrate community support for the Corridor; and
14

15 **WHEREAS**, active planning efforts are currently underway to realize a seamless non-motorized
16 trail connection between the Fish Creek Trail and the Coastal Trail; and
17

18 **WHEREAS**, the Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan Update encourages Greenway-Supported
19 Development that incorporates natural open spaces, creek corridors, and pedestrian routes
20 across Anchorage for infill/redevelopment projects; and
21

22 **WHEREAS**, daylighting streams has been shown to mitigate flooding hazards, improve the
23 livability of the built environment, and reduce runoff pollution thus improving water quality and
24 making it more habitable to salmon; and
25

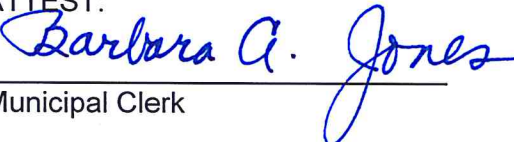
26 **WHEREAS**, accomplishing this goal will take innovation and administrative flexibility; daylighting
27 Fish Creek / Ch'atanaltsegh Łiq'aka Betnu has the potential to enhance the quality of life in
28 Anchorage and provide remarkable recreational opportunities for residents and tourists; and
29

30 **WHEREAS**, while the goal of daylighting Fish Creek / Ch'atanaltsegh Łiq'aka Betnu has
31 significant practical and fiscal challenges, the potential rewards are worth setting the goal and
32 working towards its accomplishment.
33

34 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY** supports
35 daylighting Fish Creek / Ch'atanaltsegh Łiq'aka Betnu and finds daylighting is compatible with
36 the Anchorage 2040 Land Use [ANCHORAGE AREA]Plan goals. The Assembly encourages
37 action by the Administration and the Anchorage community to support daylighting Fish Creek /
38 Ch'atanaltsegh Łiq'aka Betnu, and further encourages the establishment of a continuous east-
39 west non-motorized corridor that follows Fish Creek / Ch'atanaltsegh Łiq'aka Betnu; and calls on
40 Municipal departments to protect and enhance[PRIORITIZE PROTECTING AND ENHANCING]
41 sections of Fish Creek / Ch'atanaltsegh Łiq'aka Betnu that are currently daylighted.
42

43 PASSED AND APPROVED by the Anchorage Assembly this 25th day of September, 2018.
44

45 
46 _____
47 Chair

48 ATTEST:
49 
50 _____
51 Municipal Clerk



MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

ASSEMBLY MEMORANDUM

No. AM 605-2018

Meeting Date: September 25, 2018

1 **From:** ASSEMBLY MEMBER CROFT AND ASSEMBLY MEMBER QUINN-
2 DAVIDSON

3
4 **Subject:** AR 2018-277 – A RESOLUTION OF THE ANCHORAGE MUNICIPAL
5 ASSEMBLY SUPPORTING EFFORTS TO DAYLIGHT FISH CREEK,
6 ALSO KNOWN BY THE DENA’INA PEOPLE AS CH’ATANALTSEGH
7 ŁIQ’AKA BETNU, AND ENCOURAGING THE ONGOING AND
8 FUTURE PROJECTS TO RESTORE, PROTECT AND ENHANCE
9 DAYLIGHTING OF FISH CREEK.

10
11 This non-binding resolution with no fiscal note supports the community's goal and the
12 recommendation of the 2040 Land Use Plan to bring Fish Creek water flow out of
13 stormwater culverts (“daylight”) along 36th Avenue, resulting in an open stream
14 flowing above ground from Cuddy Park to Cook Inlet. The communities in this area
15 are focused on restoring archival stream bed and creating a new channel to carry
16 water from Cuddy Midtown Park to link with a natural channel west of Minnesota
17 Drive. This project is compatible with other planning efforts in Anchorage and mimics
18 a nationwide trend to restore urban creeks and salmon runs, opening up funding
19 potential for public/private partnerships.

20
21 This resolution supports the community’s long-term vision of daylighting Fish Creek in
22 future city planning documents and, ultimately, future construction projects. The 2040
23 Land Use Plan recommends greenway-supported development (GSD) to incorporate
24 natural open spaces, creek corridors, and pedestrian routes. GSDs are a
25 development concept that focuses on catalyzing new infill and redevelopment
26 projects, based on a creek or greenway restoration. Future redevelopment projects
27 have the potential to interface with revitalized urban creeks, wetlands, wildlife
28 habitats, public spaces, or multi-use trails such as Fish Creek. Anchorage
29 Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS) has dedicated \$250,000 toward
30 creating a transportation-supported corridor plan that includes revitalizing a project
31 area containing Fish Creek stream bed between Arctic Boulevard and Spenard Road
32 and along Chugach Way.

33
34 The resolution emphasizes Fish Creek’s cultural history on Dena’ina land and seeks
35 to invite salmon back by making the creek as healthy as possible through daylighting.
36 Fish Creek is known by the Dena’ina place names of Ch’atanaltsegh and Łiq’aka
37 Betnu.

38
39 Daylighting Fish Creek and creating greenway-supported stormwater management
40 regimes could help mitigate flood hazards, which occur during seasonal weather
41 changes and large rain events. Stormwater management is expected to be a growing

1 need as infill continues in Midtown and Spenard, Anchorage winters continue to
2 warm and the stormwater system ages.

3
4 Fish Creek flows generally east to west in a natural channel from its current
5 headwaters near Lake Otis and 42nd Avenue, making brief appearances at
6 University Park and the Helen Louise McDowell Sanctuary. It enters the stormwater
7 system east of the Seward Highway where it flows westerly in culverts along 36th
8 Avenue before turning north at the Alaska Railroad right of way and discharging into a
9 natural channel of the creek at Old Hermit Park in Spenard. The Municipality of
10 Anchorage Watershed Management Division maps a natural channel of Fish Creek
11 beginning on privately-held lots adjacent to Wilshire Avenue between Arctic
12 Boulevard and Spenard Road. The section of the natural creek bed east of
13 Minnesota Boulevard carries no appreciable flow as it travels in culverts under
14 Minnesota Boulevard. The creek turns in a northerly direction at Northwood Drive and
15 winds through Spenard and Turnagain before discharging at the Fish Creek Estuary.

16
17 Much of the creek downstream and west of Minnesota Boulevard continues to flow
18 today despite extensive development and stormwater management changes in
19 Anchorage since 1950. Roughly half of the main channel is contained in buried
20 culverts, especially through midtown from Tudor Rd. to Cuddy Midtown Park to west
21 of Minnesota Drive. Specific lengths have not yet been identified. Preliminary
22 hydrological work indicates that the culverts carrying water from C Street west to
23 Minnesota Boulevard are 7-10 feet below grade. A 1950 aerial map shows the creek
24 becoming channelized north of 36th Avenue just to the west of Arctic Boulevard.
25 Cuddy Park sits atop the storm drain that conveys Fish Creek on its way to the
26 remnant stream channel west of Minnesota Boulevard.

27
28 In addition to the creek daylighting, the community supports the creation of an east-
29 west non-motorized, pedestrian corridor. A long-term goal is to design and build a
30 greenbelt trail with a creek flowing in Spenard and Midtown, much like Campbell
31 Creek and Chester Creek today. Rallying around a long-term project such as the Fish
32 Creek Trail and greenbelt connecting Spenard to Midtown will be essential to
33 inspiring private investment, despite the significant challenges presented by a project
34 of this scope. Extending the trail and creek corridor to Lake Otis would provide a
35 connection to the UMed District.

36
37 There is currently no cost estimate or design plans for the restoration. An
38 engineering firm (HDR Inc.) is evaluating the restoration feasibility for the section
39 between Arctic Blvd. and Minnesota Drive. That project will include some basic cost
40 estimates and a potential engineering summary for this area. These results should
41 provide some basic unit cost estimates for other possible daylighting work in the Fish
42 Creek watershed.

43
44 Restoring some or all of the channel from Cuddy Midtown Park to Minnesota would
45 likely cost many millions since such an action would require some land acquisition,
46 significant channel realignment, and major crossings of C Street and Arctic. Where
47 such investments should be prioritized would be a topic for future discussion by this
48 body, along with the possibility of partnering with public and private funders. Some
49 funding sources could include the EPA's Urban Waters Restoration Program,

1 National Fish & Wildlife Foundation's 5-Star Program, American Rivers and the River
2 Network. The creation of a Stormwater Utility System in the Municipality of Anchorage
3 has been an ongoing discussion in the public and private sectors and has the
4 potential to provide significant capital funds for greenway-supported development in
5 the Fish Creek corridor.

6
7 Respectfully submitted:

8
9 Eric Croft and Austin Quinn-Davidson
10 Assembly Members, District 3 (West Anchorage)

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Exhibit A
Map of Fish Creek

