



**MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION**



**MINUTES OF THE
REGULAR MEETING**

March 14, 2024

The March 14 meeting was held in person at Spenard Community Recreation Center.

CALL TO ORDER

The March 14, 2024, regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission was called to order by Chair Brian Looney at **6:04 p.m.**

ROLL CALL

Commissioners present:

- Commissioner Edwin Blair
- Commissioner Bruce Graham
- Commissioner Brian Looney
- Commissioner Andrew Kastning
- Commissioner Scott Wamsganz

A quorum was achieved with **five** members present.

Staff present:

- Taylor Keegan
- Mike Braniff
- Tanya Hickok
- Ellen Devine

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Upon motion duly made by **Commissioner Kastning** and seconded by **Commissioner Blair**, the Agenda for the March 14, 2024, meeting was unanimously approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Upon motion duly made by **Commissioner Blair** and seconded by **Commissioner Wamsganz**, the Minutes of the December 7, 2023, meeting was unanimously approved.

DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

Mike Braniff, Parks and Recreation Director

1. **Trail Conditions:** Great for biking but not great for skiing. The warmer days are making it harder to set the classic ski tracks.
2. **Horticulture:** The horticulture crew is hard at work getting the plants ready for summer. The blooms aren't there yet, but the greenhouses are full of green.
3. **Healthy Spaces:** As the sun starts to melt out areas, this team is
4. **Youth Employment in Parks:** Currently gathering applicants and we look forward to another summer of YEP projects. Brad and Annie do a TON to advertise to students including presentations, job fairs, and
5. **Arctic Winter Games:** We are hosting some of the Arctic Winter Game spillover at our facilities including biathlon and snowshoe biathlon.
6. **Green Thumb Classes:** This is the third year of this fun class series between horticulture and recreation to teach folks how to be good plant parents.
7. **Aquatics:** This is another crew that is short-staffed, but luckily, we often offer Lifeguard certification classes and try to recruit new staff through those certification classes.

Taylor Keegan, Parks Superintendent

1. **Staffing:** As Mike mentioned, we are doing a ton of hiring. This upcoming weekend is the last weekend for youth to apply to for Youth Employment in Parks. We also will be onboarding a new safety officer soon. We are excited to welcome a new Landscape Architect, Melanie Hess, and are see some other staffing changes including Mike Fisher leaving the maintenance superintendent position and Annie Dubois moving from Youth Employment in Parks to become the horticulture supervisor.
2. **Operations:** We are doing some strategic planning with our outdoor crews including maintenance, horticulture, and healthy spaces. We have a lot of institutional knowledge and are trying to collect up that knowledge, and hopefully help inform new folks as they come on.
3. **Fleet Updates:** We recently got 12 new mowers and looking at additional fleet improvements including pricing a trackless.
4. **Planning:** Tonight, Tanya is bringing us a topic about the construction of the Jeff Dusenbury bike park in SASP but anticipate more exciting projects coming up in the next few months including Jodhpur Bluff erosion stabilization, Cuddy Park rain garden, and many other exciting projects.

NOMINATION OF VICE CHAIR

Commissioner Graham turned down a nomination from Commissioner Blair.

Upon motion duly made by **Commissioner Wamsganz** and seconded by **Commissioner Graham**, Edwin Blair was unanimously approved as the new Vice Chair.

ANCHORAGE PARK FOUNDATION

Beth Nordland, Anchorage Park Foundation Executive Director

1. **Grant Openings:** Currently, we have two open grants including our Challenge Grants for projects in parks and on trails up to \$40K. We will announce approved applicants in a celebration on May 17. The other grant is the Neighborhood Forest Grants. The grant through the Forest Service is to help distribute \$200K in funds to areas in need to do tree plantings and greening up spaces.
2. **Park Bonds:** Proposition 4 highlights all the projects that we are asking bond dollars for. We also support Proposition 9 for access to Chugach State Park.
3. **Elderberry Park Ribbon Cutting:** Currently planning to do it in conjunction with Concerts in the Parks on June 27.

NON-AGENDA APPEARANCE REQUESTS

There were no non-agenda appearance requests.

ACTION ITEM

PRC 24-01: PRC 24-01 South Anchorage Sports Park: Jeff Dusenbury Bike Park
PRC Resolution 2024-01
Presented by Tanya Hickok

Tanya Hickok, Anchorage Parks and Recreation Park Planner, presented the proposed Jeff Dusenbury Bike Park in South Anchorage Sports Park. South Anchorage Sports Park has been in our planning world for a while and the 2014 Master Plan highlights the desire from the community to have a bike park. The bike park will be named after a gentleman who unfortunately passed away in a bike accident.

In 2016, major development happened in South Anchorage Sports Park including the installation of the playground, lighting, the dog park, and landscaping. In 2018 and 2021 voters approved \$450K in bond funds for the bike park, and then it took until 2023 to complete bike park surcharge fill. Currently, we are planning on working on construction

in 2024 with fine grading and landscaping finishing up this year and are aiming for a 2025 spring opening.

The plan is to have 4000 LF of trails, two different pump tracks, jump trails and MTB trails. About 50% of the trails will be beginner trails and are targeted towards family use.

Upon motion made by **Commissioner Blair**, seconded by **Commissioner Kastning** and unanimously approved, the resolution was passed.

INFORMATION ITEMS

There were no information items.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

- **Commissioner Blair:** It seems like there is a lot of focus on bike trails and summer improvements. We cannot bike for half the year and it is important to look at winter recreation opportunities including the downtown grooming of the Delaney Park Strip and the winter ski classes and opportunities. With that said, I want to vocalize the importance of promoting and supporting winter activities especially in the downtown area.
- **Commissioner Graham:** I didn't know about the grooming on the Delaney Park strip and I live relatively close! That is fantastic. How have you communicated this story? Have you been on KTUU with this?
 - Braniff mentioned that he is in communication with media to try to highlight upcoming opportunities.
- **Commissioner Graham:** Opening Westchester prior to winter break? The goal should be to have it ready before Christmas break.
 - Unfortunately, the snow greatly impacted the ice production this year. The snow not only insulates the ice but also the weight creates overflow.

UPCOMING MEETING

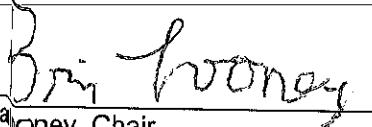

The next meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission is scheduled for 6:00 p.m., on Thursday, April 11, 2024, at the Spenard Community Recreation Center.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion made by **Commissioner Graham** seconded by **Commissioner Blair** and

unanimously approved, the meeting adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

MINUTES APPROVED this 11 day of April, 2024:

 Brianna Rooney, Chair Parks & Recreation Commission	 Mike Braniff, Director Parks & Recreation
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