

**EAGLE RIVER/CHUGIAK PARKS AND RECREATION  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

Regular Meeting Minutes – October 10, 2022

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The Eagle River/Chugiak Parks and Recreation (ERCP&R) Board of Supervisors convened on October 10, 2022, at 7:05 pm. Chair Peter Panarese called the meeting to order.

**II. ROLL CALL**

~~Barbara Frost, Birchwood Community Council~~

Alexandra Hill, Alternate Birchwood Community Council

Will Taygan, Chugiak Community Council

~~Jackie Welge, Alternate for Chugiak Community Council~~

Camilla Hussein-Scott, Eagle River Community Council

Pete Panarese, Eagle River Valley Community Council

Ruth Armstrong, Alternate for Eagle River Valley Community Council

~~Jasmine Carter, Mayor's Appointee~~

Mike Braniff – Parks and Recreation Director

Karen Richards – Parks and Recreation, Principal Administrative Officer

~~John Rodda – The Boutet Company, Project Consultant~~

**III. MINUTES**

September 12, 2022 minutes were approved.

**IV. APPEARANCES**

**A. Arctic Heat Softball – Dan Traxinger and Carl Waters**

Dan Traxinger provided a power point presentation recapping highlights of the club's 2022 volunteer hours (over 1500hrs in 2022) and continued summer work (3<sup>rd</sup> year refurbishing the fields) that went into the Loretta French Sports Complex. Additional field hardening and refurbishment along with hardening of the dugout floors was accomplished this year which was the third year of the club's work on site. The girl's summer softball program had many accomplishments and successes with twelve college scholarship offers being received in 2021. Some of the successful events this summer were the Homerun Derby and Birchwood Jamboree, Hosting Special Olympics and the Great Alaska Showcase (coaching and recruiting clinic sponsored by Triple Crown Sports) with twenty-four D1, D2 and D3 college coaches attending and participating were all well received and attended with anticipation and excitement for future continued growth. The Great Alaska Showcase also provided Veterans the unique opportunity to become trained and certified umpires free of charge through a nationwide program called "protecting the game". Alaska's 2022 Veteran turnout

resulted in nine officials being certified which is the largest number to date at any of these events nationwide.

Loretta French is now considered a premier field location for such venues in the state. The club was recently the recipient of an ARPA Round 2 Grant award and have plans to invest these funds back into the community, the ballpark, and in the continued growth of their future programs and events. They are presenting a proposal to Parks & Rec for continued improvements to the softball fields and complex at Loretta French. The 2023 Season is anticipated to hold the same events of 2022 with the addition of a possible Hit/Pitch/Run clinic being added as well.

## V. PUBLIC COMMENTS

## VI. OLD BUSINESS

### **2022 Summer Operational Highlights -**

Staffing in 2022 was a challenge with department staffing at only 50% and with only half those staff being with the department for longer than a year. Four out of seven possible full time maintenance staff, four out of eight seasonal maintenance staff, two out of six office staff and five out of fifteen full time and seasonal pool staff positions were able to be filled. Although greatly understaffed the maintenance crew worked hard to keep up with park needs and the parks looked great all summer with some minor maintenance tasks being deferred. Office workflows were managed with only two staff and saw an increase in permit requests and park use this summer. Pool operations continued with minimal staff and no lesson plans until facility closure and improvements have been accomplished. The recent pool assessment should supply the necessary information to identify and plan for needed improvements and timelines for closure. Engineers on site during the pool assessment complimented the Pool Manager on his facility operational knowledge and the fact that he has been able to continue operations.

John Rodda was under contract this summer to manage the 2022 CIP Projects to cover the vacant project management/landscape architect position and proved to be a tremendous help and asset to the department in completing this summer projects as Karen's time and attention was focused on all other areas of operation and staffing.

### **CIP progress update-**

**Beach Lake Road & Parking Lot– Phase II** – The roadway and parking lot paving has been completed. The striping quotes for the parking lot have been received and the contractor still intends to complete that work within the next couple weeks. The project cost has gone up from the original quote in 2020 of \$325,000 to a 2022 cost of \$452,601 plus additional expenses and shoulder work by Eagle River Street Maintenance (ERSM) in the amount of \$26,855 for a total project cost of \$479,456 before striping. Both CIP and Operational funds were utilized to cover this project completion. Parking lot striping design has been accomplished and we are awaiting quotes to complete that portion and still intended for this year.

**Oberg Road Safety Improvements and Mailbox Access** – This is an ERSM project that needed to utilize a portion of park property for a public safety turn out to access mailboxes and has been completed.

**Town Square Park Concrete Repair** - This project has been completed with all concrete tripping hazards and electrical repairs addressed.

**Schroeder Park Tennis Courts** – Court resurfacing has been completed and final design and striping of the courts will be determined and completed in the Spring. The project is under winter shut down with temporary fencing in place.

**Loretta French Dug Out Hardening** – This project has been completed and all eight dug outs now have asphalt floors.

**Chugiak Pool** – The pool engineer assessment was conducted on September 16<sup>th</sup>. and we are awaiting the assessment report and findings in order to provide a comprehensive estimated cost report for repairs and improvements needed.

**Dog Park** – Administrative site plan review for Phase 1 of this project has been completed and the fill and grade permit application has been submitted. Clearing and grubbing of the area has started. Once the fill and grade permit is approved, Spernak and Son, Inc. will be able to proceed with preliminary dirt work for the parking lot build up. Some roadway improvements will be made in Phase 2 per the site plan review comments as well as final grading and paving of the parking lot with fencing and park design and build to follow in summer 2023.

**Parks & Recreation Warm Storage Facility** – This project is 95% complete and is currently undergoing the final inspection process this week and depending on the final punch list of items for correction, we should receive a certificate of occupancy soon and can then proceed with equipping the building with operational storage solutions.

**Beach Lake Ski Trail Improvements** – No new information from the club has been received and the project manager (Taylor Keegan) will regroup with the club and staff.

## VII. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Arctic Heat Softball – 2023 Proposal & ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Grant Funds  
The Club received \$200,000 of ARPA funds and are proposing to invest portions of these grant funds on additional Loretta French Park improvements and request some Parks & Rec planning with fund assistance to complete. Proposed 2023 estimated Club Improvements: \$40,000 – Club purchase and installation of 2 Scoreboards on fields 4 and 1 (**Parks & Rec funds requested to supply electrical to the scoreboards**), \$30,000 - Club purchase and install batting cage and nets to be added to the existing AML/Chinooks batting cage structure (**Parks & Rec funds requested to supply chain link gates and fencing necessary to enclose**), \$3,000 - Club purchase and install padded backstops to protect backstop fencing, \$18,000 – Club purchase of field groomer equipment to effectively refurbish the fields while saving valuable volunteer hours, \$9,000 - Club purchase of weighted pitching circle and batting box covers. A weed control mitigation program is needed and remains a constant challenge that needs addressed. The Arctic Heat softball club anticipates investing approximately \$100,000 of their funds while Parks & Rec anticipates their portion of this 2023 Arctic Heat proposal

to be less than a \$75,000 investment. They also are looking to future Loretta French investments in 2024 and beyond. Parks & Rec will provide the board with an itemized cost estimate for the 2023 proposed work requests. This project is anticipated to be one of the only new proposed CIP funded projects identified for approval of 2023 CIP funds. Future improvement visions for this sports complex consist of a concession/club house, a sound system for softball fields, and eventually converting one or two softball fields to turf fields which will allow a longer and more accessible season of play on the fields each year.

B. Beach Lake Mushing Trails RTP Grant Application

Will is working on some long-term projects intended to build out a green belt system that will connect our parks through a coastal trail system. There would be one paved path along the highway and then there would be a gravel path from Fred Meyers out to the coast through Beach Lake Park, and then up the coast eventually connecting to Mirror Lake Park outside Eklutna. Approximately half that land is Eklutna Development Reserve with some Railroad corridors involved as well. ARPA funding would be utilized for this project. The parcels most feasible are the portions of land already within Parks & Rec and already have a master plan associated with them. The most desirable portion for development would be the portion of trail extending from Beach Lake Lodge out to the inlet. The proposal is for a 12-foot-wide clearing with an 8-foot-wide gravel path that could be groomed in the winter. He has been trying to bring all the stakeholders together to involve them and discuss options and plans. He has contacted the Chugiak Dog Musers Association (CDMA) to determine what they would like to see. They have been discussing a possible two-mile trail build south of Birchwood Camp to regain some trail lost to the gravel pits and the sprint trail near the clubhouse. The grant application was prepared by Will Taygan on behalf of the Chugiak Dog Musers Association (CDMA) and is seeking board approval to develop. He is requesting a letter of support from the board for the two-mile trail addition with some slight rerouting of the six- and eight-mile trails as well as rebuilding the ten mile trail that was closed by Eklutna to relocate it back into park property. Full funding for this plan is not available at this time and may have to be realized in development phases. CDMA representatives did not make it to the meeting to support, present and advocate the project needs.

## VIII. ACTION ITEM

- A. Letter of Support for Beach Lake Mushing Trails RTP Grant – *Will made a motion for the board to provide a Letter of Support for this project due to some restrictive timelines associated with the grant. The motion did not pass and the board requests that a letter of support be presented by CDMA to Parks & Rec and the board for further discussion and consideration.*

## IX. INFORMATION

- A. BOO at the Beach 2022 - The department has decided to hold a full event for 2022 with both the Trick or Treat Trail and the Haunted Trail on October 15<sup>th</sup> and not a half event as discussed in September's meeting.

**X. DISCUSSION**

- A. Staffing - Challenges and competitive pay continue to be issues for the department. There are barriers that are being looked at by the Municipality and the department to possibly provide some form of relief and draw qualified candidates in. Finding and hiring aquatic lifeguards has become a challenge in that we certify and train lifeguards only to lose them to higher paying businesses in the same industry.


**XI. TABLED ITEMS**

**XII. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm

  
Peter Panarese, Chair

1/9/23  
Date

  
Mike Braniff, Director

1/9/23  
Date