

EAGLE RIVER/CHUGIAK PARKS AND RECREATION  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Regular Meeting Minutes – January 9, 2023

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The Eagle River/Chugiak Parks and Recreation (ERCP&R) Board of Supervisors convened on January 9, 2023, at 7:05 pm. Chair Peter Panarese called the meeting to order.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Barbara Trost, 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**

October 10, 2022 minutes were approved unanimously.  
November 14, 2022 minutes were approved 4 to 1

**IV. APPEARANCES**

None

**V. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None

**VI. OLD BUSINESS**

**A. Follow Up –**

- Arctic Heat Softball 2023 Proposal requesting Parks support for fencing and electricity at Loretta French Park. – Letter of Support was supplied by the board to Arctic Heat Softball for the 2023 Proposal.
- Further discussion on the Cemetery Bond Proposal – this topic was brought before the board two years ago and a site selection study was conducted. Mr. O'Malley presented some materials to the board at the November 2022 meeting asking for board support in the amount of \$11 Million Dollars for this

Bond Proposal. The board cannot support the proposal at this time due to only two Community Councils being in support. Eklutna and Chugiak Community Councils are in support of this proposal while Eagle River CC, Birchwood CC, Eagle River Valley CC and South Fork CC are not in support at this time. Some feel there is not enough information provided to support. Peter reached out to Tommy O'Malley with an invite to return to the board with additional information and more defined costs anticipated with this proposed bond project. Camilla mentioned that Tom Looney suggested that Eagle River/Chugiak Parks & Recreation must first acquire the land before proceeding. Kevin Cross says HLB is not going to do anything with the land any time soon and can transfer land at no cost to another Municipal Organization if it's for public use which has been established. He was hoping to get this on the April ballot. They would need to know the particulars of cost, management, etc., and the entity to transfer the land to. He feels it would be nice that we secure the land under Parks Inventory, and that would require a vote of the board and resolution of support to transfer and hold the land in Park's until management costs can be developed and defined. Another benefit to holding the land under Parks designation is that we would then be eligible to apply for several federal grants available for public cemeteries but while the land stays under HLB designation, eligibility for those grants does not apply. Until we have a budget and a plan to manage and administer to it, nothing would move forward or be developed. Mike Braniff agreed with Kevin and does not feel the land is going anywhere as we look to acquire it and feels that if we ask HLB to hold it for us there would be no challenge. By the time Tommie presented the idea before him in October it was too late to get it through the bond council process. Mike Braniff feels that the reality of this happening is in 2024.

- Mushing Trail Improvements (RTP 2023) – Will was waiting to hear from the mushers on any trail improvements or expansions that they wanted to present to the board.

Barbara asked for explanation of this funding, how much is it, and what is required? Will explained this RTP grant (Recreational Trails Program) is DOT money that is awarded to recreational trails. They are looking for non-motorized and motorized projects. Because the mushing community uses four wheelers for their mushing and it is considered a high value area there is a strong likelihood that we could get \$200,000 for projects to expand or improve mushing opportunities. He has volunteered to help the mushers with obtaining this grant and his offer is still on the table but the mushers need to come before the board and provide an informational presentation on what they want to happen and a proposed budget associated. The difficulty with this funding option is that it is a reimbursable grant and he suggests we obtain support from Parks & Rec or some other funding source to provide a no interest loan for development on park property or the park becomes the

sponsor of it and that would then be refunded to the park system. He thinks it is a great grant opportunity but hard to manage because we must have the funds up front to build it. The original plan was if trails were relocated it would pay for that as well as expansion and repair of those trails. Grant applications were due the end of October and deadline missed so we have some time to prepare for the next grant opportunity. Will feels we have a good chance of being awarded these grant funds, but we do need to start the process in order to achieve planning approval etc.

- Report on Title 17 Leash Law – There is an Ordinance amending Title 17 code with revised definitions of a dog under control. The current proposal allows e-collars to be used so a shock collar would be an acceptable control while voice command would not be acceptable but in a dog park would be. Will would like for Parks & Rec to be able to define different levels of dog use so instead of everywhere having to be shock collared or in a dog park do we want to define areas where leashes are always required? He would like to see the board provide a letter in support of defining control by command since that was our request that it be added. Peter requests Will provide a letter in support and thanks to the animal control board for incorporating our recommended definitions of control by command.
- Nordic Ski Club Beach Lake Trail Improvement Proposal – President of the Chugiak/Eagle River Nordic Ski Club (CERNSC), Jason Dennis presented a power point presentation proposing some improvements to three areas of the Beach Lake Ski Trails. The improvements being proposed are removal of twelve junk cars from the trail system (\$9,075 + 80hrs volunteer labor = area 1 on the presentation), removal of trees and one junk car to create a flat surface area for kids to play in and for class instruction (\$9,756 + 80hrs volunteer labor = area 2 on presentation), clean up and develop an old reventment area with a couple trails for the kids to play in (\$6,000 + 80hrs volunteer labor = area 3 on presentation). The total cost and labor estimate provided in this proposal identifies \$24,978.19 needed for this project which would be realized through a contract with Nordic Ski Association of Anchorage (NSAA), plus 240hrs of volunteer labor through CERNSC. CERNSC proposes project costs be split 50/50 with Parks & Recreation.

**B. Staff reports brought forward from November 14<sup>th</sup> meeting.**

- Operational highlights – Status of Engineers Estimate for Chugiak Pool Repair – Mike Braniff does not have that information available. Dan Hagarman (pool manager) provided some updates on the assessment and is awaiting final engineer cost estimates associated with work scope priorities being identified. The main priority is replacement of the deck and drains with other components being prioritized beyond that. Mike Braniff estimates a budget of \$2Million to be needed with the rising costs of construction and the scope being identified for this project. Almost all pool components are needing replacement or improvements. It is anticipated that this work would

be accomplished in 2024. Steven Romanelli provided comment that South Fork CC is opposed to the Chugiak Pool repairs as this project will take away from other projects.

Mike Braniff informed the board approved Fund Balance Transfer of \$4.5 Million dollars scheduled for the 1/10/2023 Assembly Meeting is to fund each of the approved projects, and includes funds for this project in the amount of \$1 Million and \$3.6 Million for other projects that were listed and approved by the board in February 2022 CIP project listing. This fund transfer will position us to be that much closer to getting these projects moving. Mark Littlefield feels that funds should be transferred when the projects are ready to be worked and not in advance.

- Progress on CIP's: Maintenance Facility, Peters Creek Dog Park – Mike Braniff reported that John Rodda has been working on the active projects and is unavailable, but the dog park had clearing and grubbing accomplished last fall before winter and will be picked back up from where it left off. No update was provided on the Maintenance Facility.

Jamie Allard arrived late to the meeting with questions for the board. She has concern that funds have been put into a savings of some sort and does not belong there. She thinks the Eagle River/Chugiak taxpayers have been overpaying. She thinks money should have gone back to taxpayers and Mill Rate decreased. She is also concerned money sits in capital budget unused and belongs to taxpayer. She questions having someone under contract for projects and wants to know if board has seen the contract and pricing. She thinks the newly hired Deputy Director should have complete input instead of a contractor having input and administering to the capital budget of \$4.5 Million Dollars when the community is being overtaxed. Mike Braniff said the contract pre-dates his role as director of the department. Jamie is questioning the boards knowledge and active involvement in department processes and approvals. Jamie is requesting that the board postpone their prior approval of the 2022 CIP projects and associated fund transfer of \$4.5 Million with John Rodda being contracted to administer to those projects and funds. She is requesting the boards approval to postpone the Fund Balance Transfer at the assembly meeting stating that it won't hurt anything. She does not think the board fully understands their role and what they are approving. Jamie thinks the new Deputy Director will be able to do it all. Peter reminds all in attendance that they are a board of volunteers who report back to their community councils. They are not in the Department staff's offices looking to provide constant oversight. They did what they could working with staff to devise the CIP worksheet that is currently being put down. There was a rejection and approval process in the development of the worksheet but admits budget numbers are not always easy to understand.

Jamie thinks the board and department are “robbing the taxpayers” Peter disagrees. Barbara also does not agree that we have been “robbing the taxpayers” of money because for years we have been putting funds aside for projects that were voted on as a board. Barbara is concerned that she hadn’t heard that there is going to be a Deputy Director for Parks & Recreation. Mike Braniff explained that Josh Durand (previous Director) and others had decided that we need a bigger team in the Eagle River/Chugiak area, and this team needs more help. The structure they came up with was to hire a Deputy Director (a new person in a leadership position) to oversee the overall Eagle River/Chugiak Parks & Recreation operation. In the past the department had utilized the Principal Administrative Officer (Karen) to manage this with a very small organizational structure beneath her. Deputy Director will report to Mike Braniff the Director. Reporting to the Deputy Director will be Dan Hagarman (CHS Pool Manager), Recreation Specialist (Vacant), Karen Richards (Principal Administrative Officer), and a Landscape Architect II position to manage the capital projects (anticipated to be hired soon). This builds out the team, beefs up our leadership group, and moves us to an in-house person to replace the temporary use of a contractor that had been arranged utilizing John Rodda. The Deputy Director’s name is Tanya Lieberman, she is from South Dakota and moved to Alaska upon accepting the position. She was Superintendent of Parks & Recreation for her area in South Dakota, so she is used to being in a leadership position in a very similar type of setting. Tanya is due to start at the end of January and will be at the next meeting. Tanya has a background in Landscape Architecture so the department has been dragging their feet in hiring a Landscape Architect so she can be involved in that person who will be on her team. The Landscape Architect position advertises to the public in the next couple of weeks. Jamie Allard feels that it is wrong for the previous director of the department who is responsible for setting up this Fund Balance saving scenario years ago is now responsible for administering to these funds for the department and the board needs to figure it all out and fix it. Jamie wants the board’s support to postpone the Fund Balance transfer and pull it from the Assembly Meeting on January 10, 2023. Peter doesn’t see any problem with that. Barbara asked if postponing this will also postpone other projects already approved or increase costs associated with them? She feels this decision is happening very fast and being pushed by the audience. Mike Braniff feels that this will postpone some project design and possibly push some projects out another year than intended. He thinks the pool repair project should move forward due to operating time constraints associated. Peter has some great trepidation about one person (a new person) coming in from out of state and being able to just solve all the problems that are being implicated by Jamie. This person will likely need six months to really be up to speed in the department and community.

## VII. NEW BUSINESS

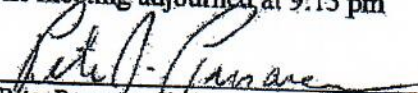
- A. **Discussion: Board Goals for 2023: review and approve budget; provide a report on the budget to community councils; and monitor the public process involved with the Beach Lake Mushing Trails and Beach Lake multiuse trail-mushing trail crossing design alternatives.** – Peter wants to implement the same level of review as last year’s board budget and CIP review process. Parks & Rec will be aiding with design and planning of the Beach Lake Mushing Trails and Beach Lake Multiuse Trails supported within the Beach Lake Master Plan to come up with associated costs of grade separated trails etc. identified within the Master Plan. Mike Braniff confirmed that the former Director Josh Durand had agreed to work with the board and Will to understand the project, the desires, listen to the community, and to understand the potential competing uses and to understand what’s possible, constrained by the amount of money we have. He thinks the grade separated crossing will exceed our available budget. Barbara Trost asked about the status of identifying the budget needed for this project as mentioned in the December work session to be supplied in January. Mike Braniff does not have that information available at this time and will have that by the next meeting.

## VIII. ACTION ITEM

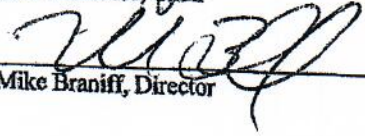
- **Approval of CERNSC Trail Improvement Proposal**  
*Peter made a motion to vote on the approval of this project now and then follow up with providing the formal Resolution of Support at the next meeting. The motion was seconded by Jasmin and passed by the board. A formal Resolution of Support will be provided by Parks & Recreation staff at the February meeting.*
- **9:00 PM Meeting Extension**  
*Peter noted that it was 9:00PM and a motion would need to be passed to extend the meeting for an additional 10 minutes.*  
*Barbara made a motion to extend the meeting for an additional 10 minutes and motion was seconded by Camilla.*
- **Postpone Assembly Action approval for Fund Balance Transfer of 2022 Approved CIP Project Funds**  
*A Motion was made to support postponement of Assembly Action approval for \$4.5Million Dollar Fund Balance expenditure. The motion was seconded and passed by the board.*

**IX. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm

  
Peter Panarese, Chair

1/22/2023  
Date

  
Mike Braniff, Director

2/24/23  
Date