

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

Regular Meeting Minutes – March 13, 2023

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Eagle River/Chugiak Parks and Recreation (ERCP&R) Board of Supervisors convened on March 13, 2023, at 6:30 p.m. Chair Peter Panarese called the meeting to order.

II. ROLL CALL

Barbara Trost, Birchwood Community Council
Will Taygan, 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
Stephan Romanilli, South Fork Community Council
Jasmine Carter, Mayor’s Appointee

Mike Braniff – Parks and Recreation Director
Tanya Lieberman – Parks and Recreation Deputy Director
Jeff Urbanus- Parks and Recreation Landscape Architect

III. MINUTES

February 13, 2023, minutes were approved unanimously.

IV. DIRECTOR’S CORNER

A. Application of Board seats and Introduction of New Landscape Architect

- a. An email was sent out by Karen Richards to all the Board members and alternates a month ago. There are eleven members, and the Municipality is running behind on having the members applications reviewed and their terms renewed. Two members are active in the system officially: Camilla Hussein-Scott and Jasmine Carter. All other Board members and alternates show either vacant or expired in the Municipality system. Will Taygan stated three members official duties were extended through April 12th, 2023, just for this meeting. Mike Braniff offered his assistance to ensure the applications are processed through Municipality. Ruth Armstrong and Mark Littlefield both filed their applications from the Eagle River Valley Community Council.

b. Introduction – Jeff Urbanus – Landscape Architect

Mike Braniff introduced Jeff Urbanus as the newly hired Landscape Architect who has been a member of the community and an employee of the Municipality for 22 years. Jeff stated he has been a water shed hydrolysis at PMNE and he will be starting his new position in Eagle River in a week. Jeff and his wife have lived in Alaska for 27 years and have lived in Peter's Creek since 2004. They have three boys who have attended the Eagle River/Chugiak Parks and Rec camp. Most recently, Jeff was with PMNE working on storm water drainage in which worked with Parks and MERSA. Originally, Jeff started with the Health Department working on well and septic. Mike Braniff expressed the value of Jeff's knowledge with the Municipal process he will bring to his new position here in Eagle River.

V. PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Kourosh Partow, representative from the CDMA (Chugiak Dog Musers Association) and Will Taygan CMBR (Chugiak Mountain Bike Riders) both spoke on behalf of their clubs. Kourosh stated he is highly invested in his organization through the trail maintenance and grooming. Will and Kourosh discussed solutions and came up with ideas on how to promote dog mushing and the use of the trail system. The Chugiak Dog Musers Board is approving the non-grade separated route movement to the trail system. The CMBR is aiding the CDMA with the safety of the dog teams and avoiding collisions and future confrontations between the multi-use bikers, joggers, skiers, and dog musers using the trails. Kourosh further stated that this seems to be the most user friendly for dog musers and non-dog musers and it is the direction Kourosh is wanting to take this. Will is supportive of the chicane gate system. It has been a long process, but both groups have agreed to a year around at grade crossing using chicane. Both organizations believe this could be a phased process, but due to the time limits of the grant, the groups want to move forward with the seasonal trail this year. Their intentions are to finish the trail close to next winter. Will suggested the chicanes because it is an open gate type system to cross is looking for the support of the Parks & Rec Department. Will would like to start the seasonal trail and then work with Jeff Urbanus on a design for next year. Kourosh commented that Proposal B gained the most support from the dog musers because it has the least impact for the crossing and is the path that people are taking now. The gates can be set up so people can look both ways prior to crossing the trail. Also, the CDMA is not in support of the grade separation trail proposal. Val Jokela from the Birchwood Community Council spoke in favor of the chicane system to keep people off the trails during dog mushing trail and during dog mushing season. The two fences will come together and overlap. Will Taygan informed the group there is no way to prevent someone from walking around the crossing, but it is a system to let people know something is going at that crossing. The chicane gate system is used for highspeed trail crossing at Mirror Lake. There is a sign before the chicane and orange markers next to the sign and it is highly visible. It is a mechanism to funnel people to a signal point. One of the plans is to have a double trail then people would have to get across the trail at that point. It would bring people to a pinch point so it is

one simple crossing with a gate. Then both groups can look at using and fixing other parts of the trail system.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

A. Review of the Maintenance and CIP Budget:

- The letter sent from Mark Littlefield in February 2023 was referenced. It would be helpful for the Board to reference the budget as a form of management and with quick access to. Mike Braniff spoke on Mark Littlefield's request for a comprehensive outline of the budget. From maintenance to operations to capital, to proposed projects, the P&R administrative staff spent a few days working on the request. Staff has reviewed and looked at the operating budget for the four years requested and Mike ran out of time prior to this meeting. He assured the Board the requested information would be sent out tomorrow. The P&R maintenance budget, which is the operating budget would be sent out to the Board tomorrow too. As for the capital improvement program for 2019-2022, Mike anticipated he would send out the information tomorrow as well. The mill rate was discussed, and Mike was going to double check the current rate with Courtney Peterson with OMB before he sent the information out. The current audited fund balance he did know what audited was going to constitute, but it can certainly be provided. The pre-CIP and the balance of all CIP funds is a large project for us and as it stands, there were quite a few projects that we are working to reduce because there are several completed or nearly completed projects with monies left over. The staff is working on drawing the funds back. From completed projects into the CIP, Mike stated there are designated funds or similar projects to consolidate down. It should be narrowed down to ten or twelve projects and then our currently funded CIP projects will have funds obligated. It is important in helping the Board members to understand the budget. Mike proposed a three or four meeting time frame if necessary to spend ten to fifteen minutes a meeting to continue to work through and answer the questions of the Board members. Pete Panarese informed the group the mill rate in 2014 was .7 for operations and .3 for CIP. Mike Braniff stated the .7 and the .3 means that 70% of the budget was going to maintenance and operations and 30% was going towards capital projects. The mill rate is currently set at .9 or 90% going towards maintenance and operations and 10% for capital projects. The mill rate can go as low as 70% and as high as 90% for maintenance and operations. Pete stated that it is relatively easy to take operating dollars and turn them back into capital dollars, but it is more difficult to turn capital dollars into operating dollars. The more assets that are built the more maintenance. Barbara Trost commented that P&R needs to be able to maintain big projects prior to approval.

B. Parks & Rec Staff Recommendation on Beach Lake

- The Parks & Rec Department and Project Champions have had the assistance of Josh Durand, volunteer contributor, with the Beach Lake project. This will be the first project added to Jeff Urbanus' workload. He requested more time for the P&R Department to understand the agreement with Kourosh as how it relates to the master plan and what has been proposed as to a seasonal approach without the grade separation trail. Will Taygan expressed concern over the permitting process to build the trail and start using the grant funds. He commented on how challenging the soft surface trails have a huge amount of variation as they are built. The P&R recommendation Beach Lake improvements was delayed until April.

C. Mirror Lake Connecting Trails Request from CMBR

- CMBR is requesting a 600-foot connecting trail at Mirror Lake. They are also requesting \$40,000 in matching funds for the Mirror Lake trail improvements. Will Taygan reported the Board approved two small bike mountain bike connecting trails to improve safety and sustainability of the trails. A third trail was not made on the agenda last week as it is a new connection, and it is not a mountain bike trail. Construction equipment will be mobilized to the site, and it is a 600-foot connector. This would connect the two legs of the two trail multi-use trail. In 2022, half of the trail was hardened off and has become a poplar trail and the CMBR has been asked by the dog walkers if the rest of the trail would be hardened off. CMBR would like to give the dog walking community a year around hardened trail to improve separation of uses. Another item is the current trail people walk past and across Camp Gorsuch Road. Will thinks it would be beneficial to put a short connector to minimize trail crossing and if a grade it put on the trail, people will stay on the trail. CMBR does not have the funds to build the trail, therefore, CMBR is investing \$30,00-\$40,000 into the mountain bike trail system. Mike Braniff commented P&R would be supportive of the \$40,000 request as matching funds. Pete Panarese made a motion to approve the trail. Camilla seconded the motion. Motion passes. Will Taygan stated the trail will be built if the funding is approved in April.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Proposal from CDMA Requesting \$20 K in Matching Funds

- Will Taygan is assisting Kourosh with his project with CMBR. CMBR as a part of the ARPA grant, they set aside a certain percentage to invest in other trails that they believe in. The mission of CMBR is improving trails for the community. CMBR has offered \$20K of their ARPA grant funds to the mushers to help widen their trails. However, it is not enough funds to complete the entire project. Kourosh Partow commented that these monies would be used for clearing the trails to improve visibility. In the past eight

years, the CDMA have not requested any funds from P&R. CDMA is 100% volunteer organization; they do not have the manpower to clean up miles of trails. The timeline to complete this project is very soon according to Kourosh due to the rainfall in a month to a month and a half. Pete Panarese pointed out the last proposal was approved, and a resolution was to be signed at this meeting. Jeff Urbanus is to create and bring a resolution to be signed at the April meeting. A motion was made to approve the \$20K matching funds for the spring trail cleanup. Camilla seconded the motion. Motion approved.

VIII. ACTION ITEM

- Staff recommendations on the Beach Lake improvements have been delayed.
- Approval of staff drafted resolution of the Chugiak Eagle River Nordic Ski Club Beach Lake trail improvement. Will Taygan made a motion to move forward with this project. Pete stated that the Beach Lake trail improvement would not be resolved right at this moment.
- The CMBR request for connecting trails at Mirror Lake with the \$40K matching funds. The motion failed on matching funds. The trail was approved, but the Board wants to see where it is notated in the CIP to approve the matching funds.
- CMBR's request for \$20K matching funds for trail improvement proposal. Barbara Trost supports the trail improvements but wants to see the staff recommendation to the Board first.

IX. Board Elections for Chair and Vice Chair

- Will Taygan nominated Camilla Hussein-Scott as Chair of the Board. Camilla offered to serve as the Chair. Camilla was appointed as Chair. Stephen Romanilli nominated himself as Vice Chair of the Board. No members opposed. Stephan Romanilli was appointed as Vice Chair.

X. DISCUSSION

- There was no further discussion.

D. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.



Camilla Hussein-Scott, Chair

4/20/2023

Date



Tanya Lieberman, Deputy Director

04/20/2023

Date