

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

Regular Meeting Minutes – August 14, 2023

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Eagle River/Chugiak Parks and Recreation (ERCP&R) Board of Supervisors convened on August 14, 2023, at 6:31 p.m. Chair Camilla Hussein-Scott called the meeting to order.

II. ROLL CALL

Camilla Hussein-Scott, Eagle River Community Council
Stephen Romanelli, South Fork Community Council
Barbara Trost, Birchwood Community Council
Will Taygan, Chugiak Community Council
Ruth Armstrong, Eagle River Valley Community Council Alternate
~~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

Alternates Present:

Kelly Willet, Chugiak Community Council
Clark Saunders, South Fork Community Council

III. MINUTES

May 8, 2023, minutes were approved unanimously with minor additions

IV. DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Mike Braniff shared that a contract extension for FLAMI has been drafted. This will allow for continued operation while the department completes the RFP process for a new contract. The \$4 million fund balance transfer for the pool project was passed unanimously by the Anchorage Assembly.

V. STATUS OF 2023 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

Jeff Urbanus provided an update on the status of the current park capital projects:

- The Beach Lake Multiuse project is in the design process. Public
- Peters Creek Dog Park will finish design and permitting this fall and winter. Construction in 2024
- Junkyard Play Area Project is mostly complete. Great addition for kids. Board members are encouraged to take a look.
- Mushing trail maintenance was partially completed last spring. It will be completed this fall.

- Work is currently underway on Mirror Lake multiuse trail hardening. Work is approximately half finished.
- Pool project initiation meeting is this week.
- 10-Mile Mushing Trail – working with CDMA on a possible RTP grant. Discussion ongoing with CDMA to use a contractor for trail layout.
- Additional work was performed at Oberg Field Playground, Oberg Field drainage, Beach Lake Chalet landscaping, and Mirror Lake fence repair.
- Eagle Scout Project for new sign kiosk at Beach Lake and Girl Scout Project for Bog Trail improvements at Edmonds Lake Park.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Shawn Edward Sexton from Chugiak presented several items to the BOS. He noted that there was inconsistency between the advertised meeting start time and the actual start time. Mirror Lake portable toilets were full during the hot weather and period of busy use. He noticed RV camping at Loretta French this summer. Will this continue? Are there any plans to return Peters Creek Park to a campground? It might be useful with the pending Alaska Long Trail. Work at Loretta French looks beautiful, are there any plans to address along perimeter fence?

Staff provided input that the meeting time discrepancy will be addressed. Mirror Lake toilet issues were due to staffing problems by the servicing contractor and the inability to secure additional toilets due to vandalism. This was a city-wide problem. Loretta French camping was connected to a tournament being held. There are no plans to re-establish a campground at Peters Creek Park. Weeds along fence at Loretta French are scheduled to be addressed this fall with herbicide.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. 2024 Proposed Budget

Mike Braniff provided an update that the potential 2024 budget is being worked on as an internal administration exercise. Three scenarios are being looked at: flat funding, a 2% reduction, and a 4% reduction. The cut will be applied evenly across both the Anchorage and the Eagle River Chugiak Parks and Recreation Service Areas (ERCPRSA). The area that is being looked at for the potential cut is the Repair and Contract Maintenance Services Fund. This fund is reserved for repair and maintenance needs by the Department (utility payments, fuel, repair, contract services, etc.).

During the budget presentation last Friday, the Parks and Recreation Department provided the clarification to the Administration that reductions to this fund could potentially lead to loss of capital funding in the ERCPRSA. Camilla Hussein-Scott

emphasized that the funding for this service area is different that. Mike stated that during the process of providing and seeking clarification, it was communicated by the Administration that the guidance to examine potential budget scenarios is intended to apply broadly.

Assemblymember Cross questioned why this guidance is being applied to Eagle River and Chugiak by the Administration, since the funding for this service area falls outside of the tax cap.

Ruth Armstrong asked whether this potential reduction is to the operating budget or the capital budget. The scenarios would apply to the entire budget. A discussion ensued about the difference between Anchorage and Eagle River with respect to what happens to unspent operating money.

Will Taygan asked for clarification about whether this is an academic exercise or if the Department seeking approval for a budget reduction. Mike communicated that perhaps this item is before the BOS prematurely. The Department will come to the BOS in the future with a budget recommendation.

Ruth asked for clarification about the role of the BOS in approving the operating versus the capital budget. Jeff Urbanus provided clarification about Anchorage Municipal Code laying out the responsibility for the BOS to approve an overall mil rate and determine the ratio divided between operating and capital funding.

John Rodda provided some history from his past role as Parks and Recreation Director. Pre-2004, the operating budget on Eagle River was paid from taxes collected in the ERCPRSA and capital funding relied on approval of capital project bonds. It was difficult to get Anchorage to approve bonds for projects in Eagle River. The current scenario of operating and capital funding coming directly from the ERCPRSA was created. The ratio between operating and capital dollars was originally 50/50. It has changed over time to meet the needs of things like staffing and maintenance requirements. It has been as high as 90/10, it is currently at 80/20.

John also provided additional input that he feels that there is a potential flaw in what the Administration is proposing. It may lead to future issues with staffing and maintenance. He believes that a cut to capital funding would be better. He also offered that in the past, the Repair and Contract Maintenance Services Fund had line items listed under it, rather than a single lump sum.

Mike clarified that a capital funding cut was the original proposal by Eagle River Chugiak Parks and Recreation staff. It was presented to the Administration. This is not what the Administration is looking for; they are looking for efficiencies and belt-tightening. They do not want to see cuts to capital projects.

Will pointed out that in adjusting the funding ratio from 90/10 to 80/20 this year, Eagle River Chugiak Parks and Recreation has already experienced a 10% cut to its operating budget. Mike offered that this since the money stays with Eagle River Chugiak Parks and Recreation and same amount of money is being collected in taxes, this is not the same thing as a budget cut. Mike provided further clarification that he feels the current 80/20 split meets current and future staffing needs. Eagle River Chugiak Parks and Recreation has lapsed money several years in a row in the operating budget.

Barbara Trost offered that flat funding is not actually flat funding. She is concerned about the impacts of inflation and increases in labor costs. She is concerned that budget reductions will lead us back to the place where adequate funding for the Eagle River Chugiak Parks and Recreation was an issue. She believes that irregularities like COVID were part of the reason for the recent operating budget lapses.

Will said that he will take this information back to Chugiak Community Council for their input. He asked whether CBERRRSA is undergoing the same exercise. It was clarified that they are not, although all departments were given the same guidance.

John Rodda provided some history about how budget cuts were applied within the two park service areas during previous budget cuts under prior administrations. A discussion ensued. Mike stated that when he received the budget guidance from the Administration, he decided, as a matter of equity, that cuts should be applied equally between the two service areas. This is not a decision that he came to lightly.

Stephen Romanelli asked whether it would be possible to get a copy of the presentation that was delivered to the Administration. Mike clarified that it was an oral presentation but that it could be discussed in greater detail next month.

Barbara, agrees with Will that it would be helpful to get feedback from her Community Council. She would like to have something to take back to them to review.

B. Draft 2024 Capital Improvement Projects

Jeff Urbanus presented a draft of the projects that are being proposed for 2024. This is part of a larger effort to create a 5-year capital projects plan. Approval is not being requested at this time. This is being presented for the BOS to review.

The projects that are being planned for next year are a combination of projects from the failed 2022 capital budget package, requests by users groups, and Department identified needs.

Barbara asked about how much money is available for future projects. Jeff is in the process of developing a more refined number for the board but that number but it is approximately \$2 million.

Camilla asked whether there is an excel spreadsheet or something similar that shows the capital project budget. Jeff offered that this is part of the overall effort to create a 5-year capital plan and that the information would be made available prior to seeking approval for the 2024 capital projects.

Will provided his view of what the BOS's role should be in terms of budget details of the capital program. He provided the observation that the proposed 2024 projects are well distributed within the community and amongst user groups.

Jeff provided a short explanation of the projects that are being proposed for 2024.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Approval of Additional 2023 Capital Projects: Mirror Lake/Edmonds Lake Master Plan and Loretta French Scoreboards

- (1) The Department presented the BOS with a resolution to approve a new project for a Mirror Lake/Edmonds Lake Park Master Plan. The project was previously approved by the BOS for \$100,000. When the 2022 fund balance failed, no money was transferred to set up funding for that project. The department is seeking \$120,000 to initiate the project now.

Stephen requested documentation on the cost and need for the project. Jeff acknowledged that this was the prior guidance by the Board for approving new projects. The Department mistakenly assumed this to be a different case, since the project was previously approved.

Will requested a vote to approve the project. No second was received. The department will follow up with the BOS by email this week with the background information documenting the need and cost of the project. The BOS will take action via email.

- (2) The Department presented the BOS with a resolution to approve a new project for the installation of four new electronic scoreboards at Loretta French Park. Like the Mirror Lake Park Master Plan, this project was part of the 2022 capital project package and was previously approved but no money was transferred to the project.

Dan Traxinger of Arctic Heat Softball provided the Board with a summary of the project, including that the club has secured additional funding. The additional funding will allow for four vs. two scoreboards. Approval of this project now will allow for the engineering and electrical service upgrades to occur this fall, allowing for installation next spring.

Will offered a motion to approve the project. Barbara provided a second with a friendly amendment that the Department provide information about the project cost and need via email. The motion passed unanimously.

B. FLAMI Contract Extension

The Department presented the BOS with a resolution to extend the existing FLAMI management contract for management of the MacDonald Center through December of 2024. This extension will allow the operation of the Mac to continue while the Muni completes the process to advertise for a new management contract.

Will submitted a motion to approve the resolution. The motion was seconded by Stephen.

Ruth requested clarification about the status of the Mac Center audits. She feels this is necessary to resolve before granting extension of the approval. Tanya provided an explanation of the FLAMI contract status during the past three years, 2021-2023. The MOA audit of FLAMI did not occur because the contract extensions that allowed contract extension by mutual agreement did not occur. That has since been corrected.

Ruth clarified that is looking for information about the status of the management agreement audit, not the MOA financial audit. A discussion of the differences between the two audits ensued. John offered some historical perspective and provided recommendations on how the BOS should proceed.

Stephen provided a motion to extend the meeting to 8:40. Seconded by Camilla.

Will requested clarification if postponing this decision until next month would impact MacDonald Center operations. It will not.

It was observed that the management audit results could result in conditions for the contract extension. Will requested direction from the Department about how to proceed. Barbara expressed concerns about granting an extension without knowing the status of FLAMI's finances and operations. She recommends tabling the issue until next month.

Tanya discussed changes that have occurred since the beginning of the year in how Eagle River Chugiak Parks and Recreation coordinates with FLAMI. The Department is working on ensuring the timely delivery of required reports, retainage checks, etc.

This item will be tabled until September.

IX. DISCUSSION

Stephen requested information about the recent Assembly Ordinance, passed on August 8th, that requires removal of the Navigation Center material from the Eagle River Warm Storage Building by October 15th. Specifically, is there a plan in place in how to respond if this does not happen.

Ruth submitted a motion to extend the meeting to 8:45; seconded by Camilla.

Tanya will speak with Assemblymembers Cross and Myers, if the materials are not removed by the 15th. The Department will keep the BOS updated about this issue.

X. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

Camilla Hussein-Scott, Chair

Date

Mike Braniff, Director

Date