

EAGLE RIVER/CHUGIAK PARKS AND RECREATION
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
Regular Meeting Minutes – January 08, 2024

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Eagle River/Chugiak Parks and Recreation (ERCP&R) Board of Supervisors convened on January 08, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. Vice Chair Stephen Romanelli called the meeting to order.

II. ROLL CALL

Will Taygan, Chugiak Community Council
Ruth Armstrong, Eagle River Valley Community Council
Stephen Romanelli, South Fork Community Council
Pauline Tise, Eagle River Community Council
Carol Perkins, Birchwood Community Council (Alternate)

Staff Present:
Mike Braniff
Kellie Jorgensen
Jeffrey Urbanus

III. MINUTES

October 9, 2023, minutes were approved unanimously.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Assembly member Kevin Cross informed the Board of an upcoming proposal before the Anchorage Assembly. If approved, a question would appear on the upcoming ballot to that would approve funding to for the construction of public Portland-Loo style bathrooms. Kevin intends submit an amendment to ask for \$600K for the replacement of the Mirror Lake Park toilets. Jeff provided Kevin with an estimate for the cost of repairs. The rationale is that the cost of providing these proposed public restrooms is area-wide but none are planned for the Eagle River/Chugiak area.

V. Director's Update

Mike Braniff noted that the recent Winter Wonderland was successful. The McDonald Center is preparing to host events for the upcoming Arctic Winter Games. Gorsuch Road is now being plowed by the department from the mailboxes to the "Tee." Rentals are up for the Beach Lake Lodge and Cabins, as well as the Beach Lake Chalet. Sledding at Loretta French has been popular with all this year's snow. The pool is currently closed for repairs that were uncovered during the work to replace the chemical feed controller. The plan is still for the Chugiak Pool to open for the summer, through the high school dive and swim seasons, and then close for the major pool repair project. Maintenance

staffing is particularly low currently, the lifeguards are currently filling the gap with the pool being closed.

Mike introduced the new deputy director, Kellie Jorgensen. Kellie provided an update of her work background. She has worked for state parks in the past and comes to us from JBER. Kellie has experience in recreation programs and recreation facility management.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

- A. 2024 Capital Projects: – Ruth Armstrong proposed a motion to formally approve the 2024 Capital Projects that were previously reviewed by the Board of Supervisors via email in December. Will Taygan seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Elections: Will Taygan nominated Stephen Romanelli to serve as chair and Pauline Tise to serve as vice-chair. Ruth Armstrong provided a second. The nominees were elected unanimously.
- B. Mirror Lake Toilet Replacement: The Board of Supervisors discussed Assemblymember Cross's proposed amendment to the public toilet proposal going before the Assembly. One item of discussion was whether the proposal was indeed an area-wide proposal or limited to the Anchorage Bowl. Will Taygan provided the viewpoint that if Chugiak/Eagle River is going to be paying for this project, they should be receiving a service. Assembly member Myers provided the additional information that of the 40 Portland-Loo bathroom units installed in Portland, Oregon, only 16 are still in service. Ruth Armstrong proposed a motion to encourage the Chugiak/Eagle River assembly members to request an amendment that would allow for the replacement of the Mirror Lake vault toilets as part of the scope of work going before voters, if it were indeed an area-wide proposal. Will Taygan seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
- C. Budget Ratio for 2024: Mike Braniff thanked members for attending a recent work session on the Eagle River Chugiak Parks and Recreation Service Area budget and provided a synopsis of the 2023 operating budget. Mike recognized that it appeared that the consensus of the Board following the work session is that a 0.7/0.3 split is preferred. There will be an anticipated lapse this year of approximately \$500K, almost entirely from unspent labor costs due to unfilled positions. As the department moves toward being staffed, it would be looking at essentially zero money left over at the end of the year. Given that neither the Landscape Architect position or the Deputy Director was filled for the entire year and there is a plan to hire a Recreation Specialist and a Working Foreman, it makes sense to keep the operating/capital budget ratio at 0.8/0.2. A 0.1 shift represents approximately a \$420K shift away from the operating budget. The intent is to allow the department to remain flexible for things like anticipated repairs. Mr. Braniff anticipates that there is a reasonable chance that an 0.7/0.3 ratio will place us in the position of

having to go the Anchorage Assembly for a fund balance transfer to cover operating shortfalls. If the employment picture changes, these shortfalls are likely.

During the ensuing discussion it was noted that the 2023 budget was the first year of a 0.8/0.2 split, the previous year being 0.9/0.1. Perhaps the full impacts of the switched are unknown. Will Taygan offered that he thought the current split was a conservative approach. He also offered that with the recent changes to municipal code, action by the Board of Supervisors on the budget ratio is a recommendation to the department, rather than an approval.

Mark Littlefield asked how much money was currently in the fund balance. The department did not have an exact number given the recent withdrawals for the pool but agreed with Mark's estimate of \$6.5 million. Mark offered that he did not think that going before the Assembly for a fund balance transfer to cover budget shortfalls was a difficult endeavor. The denial by the Assembly in 2022 was a unique situation.

There was a short discussion about whether additional funds being moved to the capital budget in April would translate into additional projects in 2024. Yes, this is possible but the department expressed that it would be easier, is there was a change to the ratio, to have it effective in 2025. This would allow for additional time for project planning in the winter 2024/2025. April is a bit late for an influx of money for projects that are already being planned. The department also offered the observation that one of the only downsides of the service area funding model, is that savings are required for large projects. While as casual approach to large amounts of money in fund balance raise questions about taxation and accountability, large projects like the recent \$4 million pool repair, savings larger sums of money is required when bonding is not an option.

Mark Littlefield offered the observation that given the size of recent lapses and the amount of money in fund balance, multiple years of fund balance transfers to cover operating shortfalls would be possible. It would give the department time to fine tune the right budget ratio.

Stephen Romanelli questioned whether a 0.75/0.25 split was an option. With several recent anomalous years and 2023 representing a "good year," he'd be curious to see where things stand following a 0.75/0.25 split in 2024. Additional discussion circled back to the role of the Board, the difficulty of requesting fund balance transfers from the assembly, and the likelihood of full employment within the department in the coming year. Stephen offered a motion to recommend that the department adopt a 0.75/0.25 split, effective the first quarter budget revision in April. The motion was seconded by Pauline Tise. The motion passed 4 to 1.

VIII. DISCUSSION

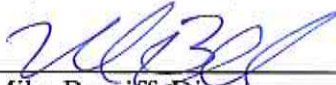
Assembly member Scott Myers provided clarification that the Portland Loo proposal is an area wide proposal. A short discussion ensued as to whether the earlier motion covered this scenario, it was agreed that it did.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Stephen Romanelli asked for a motion to adjourn. Carol Perkins made a motion, Stephen seconded, the meeting adjourned at 7:43 PM



Stephen Romanelli, Vice Chair 20240212
Date



Mike Braniff, Director 2/12/2024
Date



Kellie Jorgensen, Deputy Director 2024 0212
Date