

# EAGLE RIVER/CHUGIAK PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Regular Meeting Minutes, Harry MacDonald Center – October 21, 2024

## **I. CALL TO ORDER**

The Eagle River/Chugiak Parks and Recreation (ERCP&R) Board of Supervisors convened on October 21, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. Chair Stephen Romanelli called the meeting to order.

## **II. ROLL CALL**

Stephen Romanelli, South Fork Community Council  
Pauline Tise, Eagle River Community Council  
Will Taygan, Chugiak Community Council  
Ruth Armstrong, Eagle River Valley Community Council  
Barbara Trost, Birchwood Community Council

Staff Present:

Mike Braniff  
Jeffrey Urbanus

## **III. MINUTES**

The September 9, 2024, BOS minutes were approved unanimously with a small change to the Roll Coll. Ruth Armstrong motioned to approve; Will Taygan seconded.

## **IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

John Rodda asked the Department to clarify its current procedure regarding the posting of past meeting minutes and agendas. Also Mr. Rodda expressed concerns about whether the meetings were being noticed, as required by municipal policy

## **V. DIRECTOR's UPDATE**

Mike Braniff clarified that Kellie Jorgensen was no longer employed with the Parks and Recreation. Jeff Urbanus has been helping to fill in some of the holes created by her departure.

The Department has received letters from a number of the local community councils expressing concern about perceived lack of transparency, particularly in regard to budgeting. Mike has spoken with several past and current MOA directors about ways the department can improve its communication and procedure. Moving forward, the department will make an effort to solicit and incorporate more requests from the public.

## **VI. OLD BUSINESS**

### **A. Capital Project Scoring**

The scoring criteria proposed by the department during last month's meeting was not well received by either the public or the Board. The topic will be tabled and the funding of capital projects will proceed as it has in the past. The department thinks that the idea still has merit and may revisit the idea in the future but in a manner that seeks more input from the Board, the public, and the community organizations that are impacted

### **B. Eagle River Town Center Community Room AV Equipment**

Kellie Jorgensen was the point person for this project. Moving forward, Jeff Urbanus will be directing this project. His first step will be re-engaging with the IT Department to establish a final scope, budget, and schedule.

### **C. New Maintenance Building**

This item was raised as an item of concern during last month's meeting. The original budget for a new maintenance building, approved by the Board was \$2 million.. Since that approval, construction costs have greatly increased. Maintenance and Operations has estimated that costs to construct a building could be as great as \$1000/square foot. Mike offered that Karen Richards has had some additional discussion that leads her to believe that costs could be less, closer to \$500/square foot. Mike Braniff suggests that a work session is scheduled to look at the needs of the maintenance crew and use that information to create an updated scope for the maintenance building, as well as a revised cost estimate. Mike suggested that the public's view of this type of improvement may be different than a park amenity that is used by the public.

### **D. FLAMI Contract**

The necessary audit to close out the existing FLAMI contract has not been completed. The department feels it will be necessary to put another contract extension before the Assembly. The last extension was for 12 months. An extension of the same length would place the end date of the contract at the end of the year. As discussed at prior BOS meetings, this is not practical given the hockey calendar. A 6- or 18-month extension, ending in June would be preferable.

An 18-month extension would allow for the necessary contract closeout activities to occur before signing a new contract. It is unclear whether this could be accomplished in a 6-month period.

Stephen Romanelli stated that the Board had previously directed the Deputy Director to have a new RFP completed by the end of the year. That was not accomplished and it is frustrating to be in this position

The Board discussed how utility costs for the MacDonald Center are allocated between Parks and Recreation and FLAMI.

Ruth Armstrong offered a motion to have staff prepare a resolution for the November Board Meeting, approving an 18-month extension. Will Taygan seconded. The motion was amended with the clarifying information that in this 18-month period two-items would be performed: a contract close-out compliance audit by the MOA and a third-party financial audit of FLAMI from 2018 forward. The amended motion passed unanimously.

#### **E. Loader Update**

MOA Fleet Maintenance is not happy with the quotes they have received for a new loader. They are all in the \$150,000-plus range. Staff has found used loaders in the \$100,000 range. Fleet Maintenance cannot purchase used equipment but the department can. Ruth Armstrong asked John Rodda to supply staff with quotes he had obtained for a replacement loader.

#### **F. Chugiak Pool Improvements**

Facility Maintenance prepared an Invitation to Bid for the Chugiak Pool Improvements Projects that did not specify a wintertime construction time period. Construction outside of this window will be disruptive to community activities like the Eagle River Triathlon and the high school swim season. Not impacting these activities has been a component of the project since its inception. The ITB was pulled and will be re-advertised, with the time period for construction specified. This means the project will be delayed until 2025-2026. In the interim, some of the pool systems that were at risk or imminent failure and taking the pool out of service have been replaced.

#### **G. Mirror Lake Master Plan**

The comment period for the draft Mirror/Edmonds Lake Master Plan closes at the end of the month. Comments will be addressed during November and the final plan will be before the Board in December.

#### **H. 2024 Capital Projects Update**

Jeff Urbanus provided a short update on the status of the 2024 Capital Projects.

### **VII. NEW BUSINESS**

No items were discussed under New Business.

### **VIII. DISCUSSION**

Stephen Romanelli expressed frustration that equipment for the formerly proposed homeless shelter continues to be stored in the Eagle River Parks and Recreation Warm Storage Building. This is contrary to the Board's wishes and an Assembly Resolution passed in 2023. Mike Braniff has spoken recently with the Maintenance and Operations Director. The Port of Anchorage may take some of the equipment, now that they have purchased the structure. The other equipment will be surplussed. Stephen's concern is

that the equipment continues to be stored, longer than intended, without compensation to the Department. Will Taygan inquired whether compensation could be provided in the form of reductions to Intergovernmental Charges (IGCs). John Rodda and Mike Braniff provided some history on the original agreement between Eagle River and the Maintenance and Operations Department. The intent was to save the MOA \$80,000, in exchange for MNO installing pallet racks in the Warm Storage Building. While the storage has occurred longer than expected because of the Assembly not approving construction of the building, the expectation is that MNO will still honor their end of the agreement. Assemblymember Scott Meyers expressed concern the MOA Manager had communicated to him that the building won't be emptied until after this winter. The Board expressed their belief that since this was a financial agreement, it should have come before the Board for approval. The Board decided to table the discussion until next month's meeting

Ruth Armstrong asked for clarification from last month's meeting as to whether there is a code requirement that requires Eagle River Parks and Recreation have a six-year capital improvement plan. It was clarified that the former Deputy Director was mistaken at the September Meeting, no such code requirement. Ruth asked to have this clarified in the October Meeting Minutes.

Relative to the earlier update about the cost of a new maintenance building, Assemblyman Meyers offered his recent experience with some commercial construction projects. Those costs were far less than \$1000/square foot.

Relative the proposed 2025 Capital Projects, Barbara Trost had questions about the proposed \$1 million cost for the softball turf project. This seems to be different than what was requested by the softball club. Dan Traxinger from Arctic Heat Softball confirmed that this is indeed less than what the club had requested. The proposal submitted by the Department is for two fields, rather than the four requested. This change was made without communication with the softball club. For the club, several elements of this change are frustrating. The lack of communication speaks to the transparency concerns referenced in letters sent to the Department by several of the community councils. There is an addition problem with the change, the \$2 million estimate for competing four fields reflected some cost efficiencies for completing all the fields at once. Doing two fields next year (and 2 fields in the future will) will not be simply half the price of the \$2 million estimate. It will be some number greater than that due to two mobilizations, price increases, etc.

Stephen requested a motion to extend the meeting 10 minutes Ruth offered a motion; Pauline seconded. The motion passed without objection.

Arctic Heat Softball Club requested an update on the status of the scoreboard project and the reduction of the footprint of the batting cages. The Department continues to work

with Nevco to address the non-functional board. They have been less than helpful and minimally responsive. The Department will continue to address the issue. The project estimate and design for the batting cages were based off a set of plans for a batting cage in Anchorage. This facility is larger than what exists at Loretta French. This was unknown by all parties. There is also not sufficient space to simply mirror the existing batting cage. Doing so would not leave adequate spacing between the field fencing and the batting cage. This necessitated a reduction in the footprint of the project. This can be done without adversely reducing the size of the actual size of the space available to athletes.

Ruth Armstrong asked for an update on the status of the woodchipper. Mike Braniff supplied a detailed history of the project. Two chippers were purchased with CARES Act Money. Money was also provided for the removal of dead spruce. This money is still being spent and the chippers are still in use for this purpose. While in a previous position with Parks and Recreation, Mike had stated that he was open to giving Eagle River Park and Recreation one of the chippers at the completion of the project. The project has not been completed. Ruth asked for clarification as to whether the dead spruce removal had been allocated to the Eagle River area proportionally. Mike explained that the work performed reflects the distribution of dead spruce across the Municipality. This is independent of service area boundaries. There is simply more dead spruce in Parks in Anchorage, less in Eagle River, and very little in Girdwood. Work has performed in prior years in Eagle River. More work was performed than just the Archery Range this year. For instance, tree crews spent several months on the Beach Lake Trails last year.

## **IX. ADJOURNMENT**

Stephen Romanelli asked for a motion to adjourn. Paulin offered a motion. The meeting adjourned at 8:39 PM

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Stephen Romanelli, Chair

Date

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Mike Braniff, Director

Date