

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

Regular Meeting Minutes, Eagle River Community Room – March 10, 2025

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Eagle River/Chugiak Parks and Recreation (ERCP&R) Board of Supervisors convened on March 10, 2025, at 6:31 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
Kelly Willet, Chugiak Community Council
Ruth Armstrong, Eagle River Valley Community Council
Barbara Trost, Birchwood Community Council
Sarah Davenport, Mayoral Representative

Staff Present:

Mike Braniff
Jeffrey Urbanus
Dan Hagarman

III. AGENDA

The meeting agenda was approved without objection.

IV. MINUTES

No meeting minutes were available to review. A motion to postpone the adoption of the minutes until next month was adopted without objection

V. DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

Jeff Urbanus provided the department update. Jeff met with two groups of equestrian users who had questions about Loretta French Park. The information about the existing policies for the facility were provided. This seemed to answer most of the existing concerns. The department will work with these users to increase the amount of communication that is available and work with users where needed to make it easier to use the facility.

Maintenance crews are holding off on sweeping until the weather warms a little bit and stays above freezing. Some cleanup work from the windstorm continues

Purchases for the loader and the skid steer are moving forward.

The fund balance transfer request paperwork for the Anchorage Assembly is moving through the system. It will most likely be at the April 22nd meeting

The Department has been working to address some of the problems with the Mac Donald Center road temporarily before a more permanent fix can be implemented during construction season by the developer.

Jeff met with representatives from the IT department. The security camera project envisioned by the previous Deputy Director is not feasible given the amount of infrastructure available at the sites where cameras are needed the department will work with the board to see where that money may be redirected.

The money approved by the board in December is still not available to spend on capital improvement projects. The department is trying to work with OMB to figure out how this can be solved.

The pool ITB is moving forward. There will be a meeting with prospective bidders later this month.

Pool staff is working with Birchwood Elementary School on a Kids Don't Float program similar to what was done earlier this year with fire lake elementary.

Mike Braniff informed the board that April 4th will be his last day with the Municipality of Anchorage. He has really enjoyed working and serving with the Eagle River Chugiak community.

VI. FLAMI UPDATE

Ice hockey season is nearly finished. The Mac Attack Tournament was held last weekend over 1200 kids participating with 160 teams, playing 143 games. Concessions were operating during the tournament and brought in a good amount of revenue. The MacDonald center is preparing for summer operations

Staff at the MAC is working to try and address some of the capital improvement needs. The charitable donation that was recently received will be used for new flooring around the rink similar to what was used in the entrance

Replacement of the exterior doors is a priority. The condition of the doors impacts their operation and the gaps that are present are likely impacting ice operations, utility bills, etc.

VII. ACTION ITEMS

A. 2025 Capital Projects Contribution

The Board requested staff thoughts on the operating/capital budget split for 2025. Jeff provided a summary that the ratio was .90/.10 prior to 2023, moved to .80/.20 in 2023, and was reduced further to .75/.25 for 2024. Although operations have not returned to historical norms, the Department has moved closer to a zero budget with less money lapsing this year.

One of the items Jeff was vocal about before accepting the Acting Deputy Director position was the desire to build a team within Eagle River Parks and Recreation that was geared towards more efficiently delivering expanded park services. Jeff is concerned that continuing to reduce the size of the operating budget puts that goal in jeopardy.

Jeff requested the opportunity to take some more time, work with the Board over the coming months and develop a more robust budget process going into the fall and leave the budget split as is for now.

Barabara Trost requested more information about the status of Jeff's recent appointment. Jeff offered that he is in an acting assignment for 90 days. At the end of the 90-day period, the appointment can be extended for another 90 days. Mike Braniff clarified that the intent of the acting assignment was to allow the position to be converted to a non-represented position from an executive position. This conversion may help address the needs of the community and the high turnover that has occurred in this position over the last couple of years.

Mike Braniff observed that as long as operational items like mowing ball fields continues and you are moving are moving more money to capital projects, supplementing your operating with fund balance transfers was possible but it was unclear if this would be sustainable over time.

Mark Littlefield spoke to the proposal that he had previously delivered to the Board, a budget split of .50/.50 between operating and capital projects. Mark argued that with this type of approach, the Department would be making a commitment to its CIP Program. Mark stated that during his time as Eagle River Street Maintenance Manager, he employed this approach. He constructed an intentionally lean budget and made supplemental transfers later in the year from fund balance when it was required.

The Board requested information on how the Department determines the difference between capital versus a maintenance project. There is no hard rule. At the extremes, a new asset or replacement assets would be considered a capital project and fixing and existing asset would be a maintenance project.

John Rodda recounted the history of how Eagle River Parks and Recreation moved from a .50/.50 split and the inception of the service area to the .90/.10 split before the recent adjustments downward. Moving money towards the operating budget ensured that the

assets that were being constructed were properly maintained. This allowed the Department to respond to things like damage and vandalism. Mark responded that the practice of adopting a large operating split led to the department “pocketing” money in fund balance.

Will Taygan expressed a concern that the approach presented by Mark is designed to stress the system at a time when staffing levels are changing with Jeff in a new position and Karen retiring. Sarah referred to the previous department budget summaries that showed that as much as \$400,000 dollars were unspent on the operating side. This seems like too large of an amount.

Jeff shared with the Board that he, like Mark, has a long tenure with the MOA and he hadn't experienced anything like the budgeting process that Mark was proposing and had concerns. He had previously shared these comments with Mark. The Department has experienced some challenges over the past few years. During that time, one thing that has not waivered was the upkeep of the community's parks. If you fall behind on something like this, it is hard to recover from. The deferred maintenance items that have been the subject of Board discussion the last couple of meetings would be paid from operating funds, the money that is being proposed to be reduced.

Ruth Armstrong expressed some frustration with irregular reporting by the Department on the operating budget. Jeff stated that prior to the April meeting, this information would be provided to the Board similar to how the capital budget has been presented the last few months. Ruth proposed a motion to split the budget between .60/.40 operating/capital. This splits the difference between what Mark proposed and the current situation. This motion was seconded by Pauline.

Barbara Trost offered that typically the operating budget would be presented and the split adjusted to make sure that operations would be covered. That does not seem possible in the timeline that the decision is required. Under the scenarios discussed it was unlikely that anyone would not be paid.

The motion to adopt a .60/.40 operating split passed with one objection.

VIII. DISCUSSION ITEMS

John Rodda requested an updated report from the Department showing the staffing levels that will be supported under the new .60/.40 budget split. John also requested clarification about who is going to be the contract manager for the MAC moving forward. John feels that there are potential impacts to the contract with the reduction in operating funds.

Barbara Trost requested information from the Department that shows how the Department intends to staff Eagle River Parks and Recreation moving forward.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Stephen Romanelli adjourned the meeting without objection at 8:34.

Stephen Romanelli, Chair

Date

Jeffrey Urbanus, Acting Deputy Director

Date