

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

Regular Meeting Minutes – November 8, 2021

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Eagle River/Chugiak Parks and Recreation (ERCP&R) Board of Supervisors convened on November 8, 2021, at 7:08 pm via Microsoft Teams. Chair Pete Panarese called the meeting to order.

II. ROLL CALL

Alexandra Hill, Birchwood Community Council

Barbara Trost, Alternate for Birchwood Community Council

Will Taygan, Chugiak Community Council

Jackie Welge, Alternate for Chugiak Community Council

Camilla Hussein-Scott, Eagle River Community Council

Pete Panarese, Eagle River Valley Community Council

Ruth Armstrong, Eagle River Valley Community Council

Josh Durand – Parks and Recreation Director

Karen Richards – Parks and Recreation Principal Administrative Officer

III. MINUTES

The October minutes were approved.

IV. APPEARANCES

V. PUBLIC COMMENTS

VI. OLD BUSINESS

A. Audit Report Update and Manager Status

Josh Durand welcomed Karen back to the office and acknowledged the department's staff commitment by stepping up in her absence, he is thankful and appreciative to the team collective. There's been some challenges and moving forward things are starting to click again. The department will be pushing out both new and existing fulltime positions. Some will be near term that already exist within the budget, and some will be proposed changes probably for the first quarter revision in 2022, which will be discussed with the board when ready. The department would like to share these employment opportunities with the board to help socialize these opportunities in the community specific so we can get a better applicant pool and maybe even some local people, because that would be good for the division.

Winter is coming and holiday lights are being installed in Town Square Park which is good to see as the division prepares for the transition to winter duties.

Other things related to the audit findings: Josh mentions that he and Karen have already been laying down some groundwork for annual budgets, inventory, guiding program documents for historic and annual events that the division puts on, and those items will be brought before the board as we get closer to having them prepared and ready for viewing.

B. Review of 2022 Operation and CIP Budget Proposals

Peter identified receiving information from a couple of different sources over the last few months, in regard to the CIP and Operating budget, but in the meantime, Josh provided a link to the budget available on-line which everyone is able to access. Lots of information and numbers provided which add up to some serious amounts of money that it takes to run the operation. The detail of the numbers provided was impressive, but still found it difficult to know what these numbers buy and provide in relation. Peter mentions that the Eagle River/Chugiak division of Parks & Rec is looking at a budget proposal for 2022 of a little over Four Million dollars to run the operation and Josh will identify what the CIP budget will be. Overall page 22 to page 27 addressed the Eagle River/Chugiak budget specifically and by marrying this information up with the information on the Eagle River/Chugiak Parks & Recreation website, much of this information was provided and became clear (managing over 2500 acres of park land, a variety of different land units and types of units etc.), and was informative in that he could better understand the relationship of what the department provides with the yearly budgeted funds and feels that it might be beneficial for board members to do the same as they have future discussions with their councils and the public.

Page 37 of the online budget provided some summary tables that provide information of various things being covered by the overall Parks & Recreation budget such as permits, staffing etc. and he would like to see Eagle River/Chugiak portions to be identified separately in these breakdowns if possible. Josh identifies this information as what we internally call PVR's (Performance Measures) which are not looked at a lot, partly so because they are very confusing. The information has been provided for years and without good information and understanding of what these metrics are, what service areas are included, and he is almost certain that this information only includes the Anchorage Service Area and does not like most of the metrics contained there. He feels that they do not show a good representation of valuable information and the information supplied remains static. A recent proposal was made to the Office of Management and Budget of changing the department's performance measures to provide the best possible information and tracking metrics that have good meaning and value to those that we serve and those that represent different communities. The board should expect to see something different in the future and agrees that the information provided should be divided by the separate services areas as they relate to Parks & Recreation for more valid information. Josh sees opportunity for this information to be different for separate services areas and asks that if the board has any recommendations of metrics that they would like to be tracked, the department is interested in hearing their ideas and would want to position them into topics that are easily attainable and tracked, and not suggestive in nature. He can see this information being useful, but not currently.

Brian Fay has a question about user fees published for the parks and seems like they were modified for the pandemic and wonders about the discussion and whether they have been modified significantly? Josh identified some modifications that were made in relation to some language that did not have assembly support as it related to percentage of gross sales and the legal department observed that and determined that we don't have the latitude to do that until there is some kind of formal change that gets approved by the assembly. There are opportunities to do this through means such as Cooperative Use Agreements but not from a typical permitting perspective. Brian asks about pandemic fee reductions and limiting fees in some cases that was inconsistent. Josh identifies that Parks & Recreation received approximately \$850,000 for both Anchorage and Eagle River/Chugiak in permit relief funding to essentially encourage people to have events and recreate outdoors. There is still a balance remaining and there are many who have used the opportunity and some who have not. If a balance remains going into 2022, we will continue to provide that permit relief opportunity for park and trail users. Karen mentions that the department is currently reviewing the permits provided over the summer and if anyone feels they may have missed the opportunity or were overlooked can certainly request the department to take a second look and review their permit. Peter asks Josh for information regarding how the department plans to provide some cleanup of CIP listing utilizing Karen, John Rodda and others. Josh acknowledges that in Karen's absence it became clear that his institutional knowledge as it relates to the Eagle River/Chugiak projects was lacking and apologizes for confusion in the last several months on that topic. With Karen being back and talking with her, there were some things identified that she did not know as well. The department has brought Mr. Rodda back into the fold as a consultant to help generate some narratives for anything we are closing out and moving balances into undesignated funds, refining the known projects that we will be working on, and get that to the board for discussion. The intent is to provide a more refined plan of where the capital dollars that we have within the CIP are being allocated, the balance we have in undesignated, as well as how the Fund Balance can fill the capital projects for larger future needs as they arise. The department will do a much better job of providing this information in a clear and simplistic format to easily digest. Peter asks about the expected timeline for this information to be received. Josh expects some significant progress to be made in the next few weeks and anticipates that within the next two meetings we will probably have some reports to share on that. Some of this will be in the way of looking for direction and some in the way of support from the board. Will asks about SCORP and RTP funding and asks about opportunities for outside funding in this plan to support some of our projects in this service area? Josh informed that all funding in the capital accounts is for future projects and can also be leveraged for acquiring things such as RTP, LWCF, AMATS and other grant funding opportunities of similar nature and assures the board that when the department has been able to bring a new Landscape Architect/Project Manager directly into the fold on Karen's team that they will aggressively pursue all those opportunities and how we can make that funding go as far as possible. Having a trained person with this established skill set and type of work, we can easily follow some of the success that Anchorage has

found to be effective in acquiring some of these funds available through AMATS, RTP and LWCF dollars. Some of these funding opportunities such as AMATS requires only a 9.03% local match which allows funding to go a long way. Federal Funded projects do tend to cost a lot more but at that ratio are worth it. Will offered to help coordinate and recognize some of these opportunities with the new person hired when they are on board.

C. Board Appointments

Peter discusses some of the confusion and rumors associated with board appointments and asks Josh if there are any new appointments coming that they are unaware of and need to be? Josh responded that Stephanie in the mayor's office assigned to board & commission tasks did reach out to him with some questions for clarification purposes, but nothing has been identified or proposed to him in way of change for this board or current members. It is his understanding that they will be looking at it soon as there was a lot of static over the October 22nd Assembly agenda that had most Anchorage board and commissions on the agenda without department communication or pro-active communication to board members close to expiring etc., and things became very complicated and remain complicated but there is a solution based individual taking over all of this named Terrance and we will be leaning heavily on him to get this sorted out with the assistance of Sammy Graham on this topic as well. The board members decide to keep doing their jobs and anticipated until this topic is addressed and sorted out. Will questions whether members really need to be confirmed by the Mayor and Assembly and Josh informed that his understanding is that they do absolutely have to be confirmed by the Assembly and reminds the group that if they are aware that their term is close to expiring, and they have an interest in continuing to participate on the board and serve the community, then please do re-apply and make the information is in. When the administration sees that, they will typically reach out with questions to the department for copies of member attendance etc., and moving forward he expects communication to get better, will be more pro-active and dedicated point of contacts will be identified to work out these situations and looks forward to that day. The board discussed some of the challenges they have had in the past and Josh informed that that there is a 120 day grace period from the date of their term expiration that is allowed in order to complete the process of re-applying to the board before being truly expired. Lexi questions whether the Assembly has the power to say no to an appointment if the Community Council chooses to appoint them to the board, which is required. Anchorage boards have a different selection process from Eagle River/Chugiak board. Josh agrees to the confusion in that regard and will strive to find a definitive answer to that question as it is something we all need and want to know. Brian Fay notes that it is clear, that only the community council can appoint representatives for their community and regardless of everything else, unless Assembly makes a change in the rules, that approval for someone to represent their community comes from their community council except for the mayor's appointee.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Eklutna Inc. access Proposal to Mirror Lake/Edmonds Lake Park

The board reports on a field trip taken to the proposed access site by Will, Lexi, Peter and Jackie who walked the entire site which was educational and helpful to see the lay of the land as well as recognize and appreciate the property that we have there. Based on the site visit of the area Will and Lexi pose questions related to the chosen proposed route and feel that there are alternative available routes that would have less impact to our property and does not appear to provide a detriment related to Eklutna's interest. Josh does not know the answer to these questions but is willing to find out. He requests that the board provide specific written questions and recommendations they would like to be addressed and send via e-mail to him so he can present to the project group and acquire answers to their questions, and recommendations so we have a clear understanding in case additional action needs to be taken by the board on this topic.

Josh acknowledges that we do have concern in creating a road crossing and easement that already has use of snow machines, four wheelers etc., so when they do cross it if it does occur in an area with mature trees and vegetation function in the same way as bollards do and minimized the need for infrastructure to prevent vehicles from accessing other sensitive areas within the park but the specifics of their rationale for crossing the easement at the point they are proposing is unknown at this time, but he can certainly find out. Peter asks Lexi to put together a list of specific questions for the director to take forward in his discussion with the project team. Brian suggests it might be a good idea to invite Eklutna to a meeting so that the board can have discussion from them. Josh feels this is definitely possible, but that we should carry forward our questions and recommendations to the project team first for consideration and answers. Lexi will proceed with providing specific questions and recommendations from the board for Josh to carry forward.

B. Eagle River Lion's Park

Peter mentioned that at the last Eagle River Valley Community Council meeting, the subject of the Eagle River Lion's Park and a land trade with DNR came up and he was asked to look into this by his Community Council Chair.

Peter contacted Representative Kelly Merrick's office who is purported to be preparing legislation to affect the land trade between DNR and Chugach State Park or the Lion's Club to move the 40 acres that Lion's Park is located on, out of Chugach State Park inventory and compensate Chugach State Parks with land in other locations. This ground is affected by LWCF parameters meaning that Chugach State Parks accepted money from the Feds long ago to manage facilities for recreation purposes in perpetuity, that has to be assured with any land trades effecting Chugach State Park so there is challenge there with the Lion's Club. Pete thinks that Parks & Rec may get this sent our way and expected to manage this park. This is an urban park and recreation site with lots of issues and Peter would like to know Josh's thoughts on this. Josh reports that he and Chris Schutte met

with DNR back in January of this year on the topic of shared interests in improving CSP access and this property did come up and DNR did mention interest in offloading this asset and asked if Parks & Recreation would be interested in taking this on with land exchange and provided disclosure that if we did take this on, it comes with an assumed Millions of dollars in deferred maintenance, lack of code compliance, various life/health and safety issues etc. Josh identified that if the Municipality of Anchorage ever found a way to say yes to this idea, it would come with a significant liability and financial burden. In addition, there would be the possible expectation that we take this on and continue the relationship with the organization that operates this park now. Some immediate burdens and department oversites identified are that there would be a lot of negotiations needed, problems, subject to community critiques in how we solve those problems and the huge financial burden with the asset itself. The asset does have Land and Water Conservation Funds associated with it, which provides a barrier for DNR to simply give it to a non-public entity and needs to continue to be used as an outdoor recreation asset. The meeting ended with DNR identifying that their plan is to figure out a way to give it or sell it to the current operating entity, but they would first need to create a conservation area of another public land equal in size that would then be protected and transferred as protection of the LWCF funding. That is the dilemma they are in and Josh does not recommend that Municipal Parks & Recreation become the solution. He currently sees the only way that we could become the solution to their problem is with a lot of money. Lexi and compares this scenario to the Wallace Ranch proposed idea years ago in that there is a recreational asset with very real problems and costs associated. Brian Fay also adds some past historical comparisons of the Eagle River Loop Road and Business Blvd upgrades made years ago, and how Parks & Rec inherited responsibility for maintenance costs of those upgrades even though they were State funded projects. Brian mentions that these types of agreements require the approval of the Board and Community Councils as they certainly do affect the finances and use of the tax dollars identified for this service area. This is anticipated to be a future topic of discussion for years to come and as it develops.

VIII. DISCUSSION

Peter feels that some board appointments do need to be made in the areas of vacancies to get us back up to full membership status.

He identified that Southfork Community Council is not being represented with Josh Ream's recent vacancy, and an alternate for the Eagle River Community Council is also needed, as well as the mayor appointed designee still needs to be identified after Brian left this seat.

Camilla informs about some confusion with a gentleman showing up at her council meeting and introducing himself as the new board member for the Eagle River Community Council and she wants to make sure she is listed as the primary seat and not the alternate. This will need to be researched through the board and commission office as to how they have her listed.

Will wants to know who is responsible for the Parks & Recreation Facilities and Trail Plan for Chugiak/Eagle River? Josh informs that the Municipality of Anchorage is responsible and that through the planning department he understands that there is approximately \$250,000 for the next Recreation Trails Plan and that Parks & Recreation does plan on taking them up on their offer of transferring the funding over to us and our department then facilitate the public process for a new trails plan. Will wants to know who will be responsible for implementation? Josh mentions that responsibility will fall to the Parks & Recreation Department, unless SOA decides on some type of non-motorized trail that goes through the community collective and they have enough interest through state representatives to become a project for state DOT, they may want to take it on with the same available dollars in that type of situation. DOT does not typically look for these kinds of projects. Will identifies that through his research of all the greenbelt plans he has reviewed, he does not see any real champions and is interested to know if anyone other than Parks & Recreation and this board, is anyone else showing interest in making these plans a reality? Josh is unaware of any other entities looking to make these plans a reality other than Parks & Recreation. Will asks that as we hire new staff will we have the capacity to manage existing facilities and look towards expanding those facilities in accordance with the plans? He mentioned the Carol Creek Subdivided land that is supposed to have a trail through it. He feels the board should be pro-active and collaborate with Parks & Recreation on the plans and development of these plans. Peter offered to collaborate with Will in preparing some type of mission statement that identifies what it is, the board is looking to accomplish and to be pro-active in this process.

IX. TABLED ITEMS

- A. MT. Baldy Parking
- B. Chugiak/Eagle River Cemetery
- C. Capital Projects for 2022

X. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:18 pm.


Pete Panarese, Chair

12/27/2021
Date


Josh Durand, Director

12/13/2021
Date