

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

Regular Meeting Minutes – March 14, 2022

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The Eagle River/Chugiak Parks and Recreation (ERCP&R) Board of Supervisors convened on March 14, 2022, at 7:04 pm via Microsoft Teams. Chair Pete Panarese called the meeting to order.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Barbara Trost, Alternate for Birchwood Community Council

~~Alexandra Hill, Alternate 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, Alternate for Eagle River Valley Community Council

Josh Durand – Parks and Recreation Director

Karen Richards – Parks and Recreation, Principal Administrative Officer

John Rodda - The Boutet Company, Project Consultant

**III. MINUTES**

February 14, 2022, meeting minutes were postponed to the March board meeting for approval.

**IV. APPEARANCES**

**Jason Dennis** from CERNSC (Chugiak/Eagle River Nordic Ski Club) has a couple of projects he has been working on and would like to propose to the board. Will Taygan asked him to come and speak before the board to discuss these ideas. Bob Stehn approached Will about a year ago to discuss that the ski club wanted to make some trail improvements at Beach Lake. Will notes that the Beach Lake Master Plan does call for the ski club to identify additional trails for development and that the club has had some challenges navigating the proper process which has changed over the last twenty years and would like to help foster the process. Jason received a request to put the information into a proper format for project proposal and can do that. They want to create a kid's hill play area in proximity to the alternate parking lot area off Beach Lake Road. They would like to cut down additional trees in this area to make a varying terrain area to develop a kids play/skill area for the kids to play and ski on and feels there are some minor trail improvements that could be done on the trails in places of glaciation and some dips that could be addressed at some point to make for a better racing experience and users who enjoy the park.



Will would like to leverage this volunteer opportunity since Parks & Recreation is experiencing short staffing and requests guidance and input from the department on how to make this happen. Josh would like to see a proposal identifying the improvements that the club would like to put forward, the method and means of how this would happen and to how they relate to the Beach Lake Master Plan that helps us understand this is already something that is expected to happen and through that proposal the department might have additional requests such as better graphical information with scales and things of that nature so we can truly understand and digest the scope of work to position ourselves to say yes. Understanding the scope of the work, the metrics associated with it, amount of land being disturbed, is it wetlands or not etc., all become very influential of what the process might look like. If it is something as simple as a little bit of land clearing it is already and existing use within the park and the area proposed for the improvements is already identified in an adopted plan such as a Master Plan, it may simply be an approval through the board and department saying we're going to do this, identify a point of contact within the department that will oversee it, and then it can move forward, but that gets more complicated as the scope and scale of the project increases. Jason feels he has not received the guidance necessary in the past on what is needed from the department and how best to supply the information. Jason will send Josh Durand the club's proposal for review, comment, and guidance.

**Joyce O'Connor** is a long time Chugiak resident who is requesting that the Loretta French Horse Park be opened to the public for access without restrictions or permits being required. Karen has supplied her e-mails explaining the reasoning for restricted access, conditional use guidelines, and the permit application necessary for access to the Horse Park for equestrian use. Joyce does not feel there should be restricted or permitted access to this area and would like it opened year-round for public access at no charge to provide the horse community a place to go and hang out. She feels that much of the horse community is unaware that it even exists.

## V. PUBLIC COMMENTS –

Bill Stoltz involved with the Chinooks organization addressed the board. He met in January with Karen and John Rodda and just wanted to ensure that their good relationship with Eagle River/Chugiak Parks & Recreation continue, and he appreciates the parks & rec staff and board members who came out to honor Dixie Waddell at Loretta French. The response was very meaningful to her friends and family. Mr. Stoltz wants to make sure that the Chinook's are keeping good relations with the parks & recreation department. He had a conversation about an Eagle Scout project that the Chinook's board was not fully aware of and wants to make sure that if there are ever any conflicts, they are made aware of them and that the president copies the board on all requests so they know in advance what is being presented to the department. The relationship between the department and the Chinook's organization has been a good one and he wants to make sure that is nurtured and continues because without a good relationship with Parks & Recreation the club would not be playing Alaska Baseball at Loretta French fields.



## **VI. OLD BUSINESS**

### **A. Jasmine Carter, Mayor Appointee**

The board welcomes Jasmine Carter as the designated Mayor's Appointee to the Eagle River/Chugiak Board of Supervisors.

### **B. 2022 CIP/FB Final Report**

Verbal approval was received from the board during the February 14, 2022 board meeting, with Formal Resolution Documents being presented now for final approval. Board members and staff discussed a few final questions and provided clarifications as needed.

Projects intended for completion in 2022 are identified on the Project Timeline document supplied in this report.

### **C. AMATS - Letter of Support to Representative Merrick for bike path repair**

The board offered a letter of support to Representative Merrick to fix the Eagle River Road bike path from Genora Street down to Firehouse Lane. Community Council letters of support have also been supplied by both the ER and ER Valley CC's

### **D. Loretta French Equestrian Park – Joyce O'Connor inquiry**

Joyce O'Connor has approached the board asking to change the long-standing operating guidelines and permit process for access and use of the Loretta French Horse Park. She is not satisfied with the information Karen has supplied regarding the access and permitted use associated with the Loretta French Horse Park.

Josh explained that the permit process, availability and use conditions are in place to mitigate liability and identifying uses that are compatible. Josh recognizes that there are always opportunities for change, but those opportunities need to happen through a process with many people involved so that the best solution is realized. We have something that works right now and takes into consideration some of the dangers and risks associated with the existing user groups in that area, but things change and there is sometimes opportunity for change. He defers the specific management practices for this area to John and Karen as to how we currently make this area open to the public.

Karen explained the management reasoning behind the current restricted access of permit holders only as being in place due to the nature of the high-risk activities and events being conducted by the Cook Inlet Archers and RC Flyers who operate immediately adjacent to the horse park area. The Archers and the Flyers are required to provide very stringent and comprehensive insurance and liability coverage to conduct their club activities and are required to adhere to the restrictions and parameters covered by both their insurance carrier guidelines and those of Eagle River/Chugiak Parks & Recreation to maintain and sustain their club operations within Loretta French Park. Opening of this area to the general public will allow not only horses but various other activities and users both prohibited and not which will allow use of the horse arenas and horse areas to



anyone for any activity they so choose. The horse community would then share this space with all type of activities and will result in conflict with current users. This is not a way to limit access to horses only if opened for public access.

The current operating model of public access for equestrian use through permits only from June through October ensures that the area is available to horses and their owners for equestrian activities and the seasonal permits issued are priced at the low cost of approximately \$1 per day if used daily. These fees are re-utilized in the maintenance and upkeep of this facility for equestrian use.

The board will continue to discuss options related to access of the Loretta French Horse Park and will schedule a site visit to become more familiar with the area in question, its uses, and operational challenges.

## **VII. NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. Proposed changes to Title 17, leash laws**

Will Taygan clarified that he does not want to propose changes to Title 17 but instead would like to see specific clarifying language be created in relation to Single Track Trails, to allow bikers with dogs not be required to have them leashed for this particular activity while on the Mirror Lake Single Track Trails. Title 17 language identifies dogs must be on a leash during biking activities unless within a dog park specific. This portion of Title 17 conflicts with how we have signed the Mirror Lake Park Single Track Trails. In 2018 with discussion from Parks & Recreation it was decided that signage would state that dogs must be under the owner's control (verbal or otherwise) while riding these trails due to safety and risk factors associated with having a dog on a leash while trying to navigate narrow Single Track Mountain Bike Trails. He is asking the board to affirm the current management practice and interpretation being used on the Mirror Lake Park Single Track Trails under the existing leash law and feels that Single Track trail riding in Mirror Lake meets the Title 17 conditions for allowing off leash dogs while on these trails and with the continued expectation that dogs are under the control of their owner while using this trail system.

This is starting to become an issue with Animal Control. Barbara shared an incident that occurred between someone with six dogs and herself recently while she was in Mirror Lake Park. Brian Fay does not feel that we can make an exception to the law's interpretation but would be much more inclined to specifically say that within this park, this particular activity is allowed, and to clarify what is ok and not ok is a better way to address this issue. In summary Will is asking the board to interpret Title 17 exemptions as allowing mountain biking with a dog off leash while on designated mountain bike trails in Chugiak/Eagle River. Josh does not think that the board's actions could supersede leniency as related to Title 17, but he will have to ask others to provide clarification on this for us. Will is going to prepare a motion to bring before the board in a future meeting. His motion is anticipated to ask the board to interpret Title 17 exemptions as allowing mountain biking with a dog off leash while on designated mountain bike trails in Chugiak/Eagle River.

**B. Election of Board Officers**

Chair and Vice-Chair positions (Pete and Camilla) are up for election tonight as their year limits have been reached and the board vote on the positions for the next year.

Camilla was nominated and approved for continuation of the board Vice-Chairman position. Peter was nominated and approved for continuation of the board Chairman position. This will reflect both Peter's and Camilla's final year allowed in this capacity under the board bylaws.

**VIII. ACTION ITEM**

**A. Resolution 2022-02 – Approval of ER/C Parks & Recreation 2022 CIP/FB**

- *Resolution 2022-02 was approved by the Board*

**IX. INFORMATION**

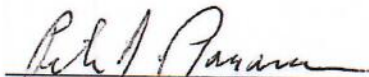
**X. DISCUSSION**

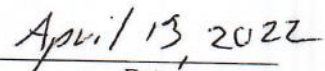
Eagle River Lions Park (40 acres) is being considered for transfer of ownership from the State of Alaska over to the Lion's club. Is there any reason why Parks & Recreation would be opposed to this transfer of ownership to the Lions Club? Further discussion may continue on this topic, as legislation and plans progress.

**XI. TABLED ITEMS**

**XII. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm

  
Pete Panafese, Chair

  
Date

  
Josh Durand, Director

4/13/2022

Date