



**MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION**

REGULAR MEETING

March 12, 2009 Minutes



I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:10 p.m. on Thursday, February 12, 2009, at the Spenard Recreation Center.

II. ROLL CALL

Roll call taken by Deputy Director Nordlund

Commissioners Present:

Chairperson Kathleen Plunkett
Commissioner Sara Boaria
Commissioner Zareena Clendaniel
Commissioner Peter Crosby
Commissioner Dan Frank
Commissioner Meagan Krupa
Commissioner Eric McCallum
Commissioner Victor Mollozzi
Commissioner David Wigglesworth (Telephonic)

Commissioners Excused:

Commissioner Allyson Beischer
Commissioner Tim Benintendi

Staff Present

Beth Nordlund, Deputy Director
Monique Anderson
Holly Spoth-Torres
Tom Korosei
Chris Conlon
Diana Cramer

III. Consent Agenda

No changes to the Agenda or the Minutes of the February 2009 were recommended. Commissioner Krupa moved to approve the Consent Agenda and February 2009 minutes

Seconded by Commissioner McCallum
Motion to approve passed unanimously

IV. Director's Comments

Beth Nordlund, Deputy Director of Parks & Recreation, gave a brief overview of the construction projects in neighborhood parks planned for this summer. She also discussed the effect of the Administration's budget cuts on the Department overall.

V. Information Items

A. PRC 09-11 FNBP – Draft Trail Improvement Plan Release

Holly Spoth-Torres, Parks & Recreation Park Planner, and Kevin Doniere, Dowl Engineers the contractor on the project, handed out the Far North Bicentennial Park Draft Trail Improvement Plan to the Commissioners, discussed the draft in detail, the methods used to gather and compile the information in the plan, and the involvement of public, user groups, and public and private agencies in preparing the plan. The Commissioners were asked to review the information in detail as the plan will be brought before them as an information item again at the April 2009 meeting. Concurrently the plan will be reviewed by appropriate agencies including the Corps of Engineers, Alaska Department of Fish & Game, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, and the Municipal Watershed & Natural Resource Advisory Commission. Ultimately it is intended that the Draft Trail Improvement Plan will be brought before the Commission as an Action Item in May 2009.

B. PRC 09-14 Volunteer Annual Report

Beth Nordlund presented the 2008 Volunteer Annual Report to the Commission, detailing the accomplishments of volunteers in our parks. Anchorage boasted almost 90,000 volunteer hours in 2008. The Department partnered with sponsors such as the Rasmuson Foundation, Conoco Phillips, the United Way, as well as private volunteers, in successful projects including 50 Bikes/50 Kids, Clean Green Safe & Secure, the Park Report Card Project, Graffiti Busters, Anchorage Treerific, Tremendous, Adopt-a-Trail, Adopt-a-Park, Adopt-a-Garden, Day of Caring, King Career Center Natural Resources Management Class, Citizen Weed Warriors, Challenge Grants, Trail Watch, Mayor's Marathon, Kincaid Project Group, Cuddy Family Midtown Park, Scoop the Poop, Skyhoundz Canine Frisbee competition, and

many others. Many volunteer hours were contributed during Public Lands Day, National Trails Day, and many other park projects, both large and small. Volunteer efforts in our community have helped Anchorage Parks & Recreation build community, take care of its parks, and improve the quality of life for the people of Anchorage.

VI. ACTION ITEMS

A. PRC 08-72 Russian Jack Springs Park – Park Improvement Plan – Final Recommendations

Dwayne Adams, Land Design North, presented the Department's Final Recommendations to the Commission, prepared after extensive public comment. While impossible to achieve unanimous public approval, a number of directives from the public were made clear. The final recommendations include seven items: public safety; provision of multi-use facilities; upgrades to existing facilities; economic viability of improvement projects; partnerships with user groups; environmental sustainability; and energy conservation. The seven standards were used to provide the recommendation presented to the Commission. After extensive discussion and debate,

Commissioner Molozzi moved to approve the following:

Municipal Parks and Recreation Commission Resolution relating to Russian Jack Park Improvement Plan

WHEREAS, Russian Jack Springs Park (RJSP) is a community park of importance to the citizens of Anchorage, and

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan, adopted in 2006, identifies the need to provide delineation of the Natural Resource Preservation and Conservation Lands within RJSP because of its important ecological functions and natural values, and

WHEREAS, previous RJSP Master Plans and a substantial number of public comments on the RJSP improvement plan support maintaining the natural attributes and values of RJSP, and

WHEREAS, public comment on the park improvement plan overwhelmingly opposed development of an alternative road access off Pine Street in the Northwest corner of the Park, tree

clearing for construction of a golf driving range and expansion of the golf course beyond its existing footprint, and

WHEREAS, there is an opportunity to address park road entry safety issues through redesigning and/or re-grading the existing park road entrance, and

WHEREAS, there is demonstrated need to provide safe sledding and snowboarding opportunities to area youth, and

WHEREAS, golfers and First Tee are only one of many recreational users and user groups that need to be accommodated at RJSP, and

WHEREAS, maintenance of golf courses and use of fertilizers and other green treatments present a potential risk to the quality of the surface water regime and the springs at RJSP, and

WHEREAS, the springs contribute to overall water quality of the Chester Creek watershed, and

WHEREAS, public surveys conducted by the Municipal Parks and Recreation Department underscore the public's desire for good water quality within the Municipality, and

WHEREAS, based on the public comment received and information provided by First Tee and the Municipal Parks and Recreation Department the existing golf course footprint at RJSP provides ample capacity to meet the needs of the First Tee program and other Municipal golf programs,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The Municipal Parks and Recreation Commission strongly advises the Municipal Parks and Recreation Department and any other municipal department or office to remove from further consideration now and until such time as a park master plan is updated:

1. Construction of a golf driving range at Russian Jack Springs Park and expansion of the golf course beyond its existing footprint; and

2. Construction of an alternative park entry road off Pine Street in the Northwest corner of the RJSP, and,
3. The Commission believes these potential developments are best left for consideration, should the public desire, when a master plan is updated for RJSP:

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The Municipal Parks and Recreation Commission recommends to the Municipal Parks and Recreation Department that all improvements utilizing public funds, pursuant to the staff recommendations as provided in PRC 08-72, Addendum 2, shall be prioritized as follows:
 - A. Sledding safety and related upgrades to Holes 1-3
 - B. Provide for a parking entrance and area to improve fire truck passage and angled parking
 - C. Playground and picnic area
 - D. Reconstruction of Holes 4-9
 - E. A Pitch & Putt Area
 - F. Natural Grass Green
2. Design and Construction of Picnic Shelter and/or Playground should proceed in consultation with park users and area community councils including but not limited to: Northeast Community Council, Rogers Park Community Council, Russian Jack Community Council and University Area Community Council. The design of these facilities should reflect the wishes of the public; and
3. There should be developed a Natural Resource Management Plan that shall include identification of both preservation and conservation natural resource lands within the park as identified in the Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan, adopted in 2006; and
4. The Municipal Parks and Recreation Commission recommends the Municipal Parks and Recreation Department prepare design drawings that provide for the immediate safety and needs of the community to include safety upgrades to the sledding hill and provide an alternative safe snowboarding area.

5. The Municipal Parks and Recreation Commission advises the Department to maintain a 300-foot buffer between the natural green and the stream and springs.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Parks and Recreations Commission this day of March 12, 2009.

Commissioner Frank seconded the motion.
Motion to approve passed unanimously.

Commissioner Molozzi will prepare the final document for signature by the Chairman and the Director.

B. PRC 09-12 Ted Stevens International Airport Runway Extension Project – Trail Impact Alternatives

Tom Korosei, Park Planner, presented the staff recommendation regarding the Airport Runway Extension Project -- Trail Impact Alternatives to the Commission. Three alternatives were proposed by the project team. All resolutions involve rerouting portions of the trail but follow previously disturbed routes where possible. The staff recommended that the Commission adopt a resolution in support of Alternative 1, generally as submitted, subject to the understanding that (1) the project would pay all costs of relocating the trail, including restoration of disturbed areas and vacated or abandoned trails; and (2) the project would fully compensate the Municipality Heritage Land Bank to its satisfaction for impacts to the value of the land.

Appearances

Jim Burkholder, Nordic Ski Club of Anchorage, spoke to the Commission regarding the Club's position, which is to support Alternative 1.

Julianne Hanson is a consultant working with the Alaska Department of Transportation and the Airport. She stated that the costs for implementing the recommended alternative will be considered a project-related impact so would be funded by the Federal Aviation Administration.

Karlee Gaskill, Heritage Land Bank, states that in order to assess compensation to the Municipality for impacts to land value, there will be an appraisal that looks at the impact of the entire project and how it impacts property value as a whole.

After some discussion regarding the trail alternatives,

Commissioner Molozzi moved to accept the resolution on page 2 of the staff recommendation.

Commissioner Frank seconded.

Motion to approve passed unanimously.

C. PRC 09-13 Van Buren/48th Avenue Potential Land Swap

Monique Anderson presented information on the proposed Van Buren/48th Avenue land swap between the Municipality of Anchorage and American Fast Freight. The proposed land trade will allow for improved safety for the Spenard neighborhood, Park, Spenard Recreation Center, Northwood Elementary School, and various businesses in the area. The Parks & Recreation Department recommended support for the proposed land trade, which includes trading 1.8 acres of dedicated parkland for 2.5 acres of American Fast Freight land directly adjacent to Northwood Elementary School. The trade also includes development of a multi-use athletic field and associated parking. It is also recommended the Commission support the project team developing a Sisterhood Park site plan that includes shared parking agreements with the adjacent Anchorage School District sites, pedestrian access to Spenard Recreation Center and Northwood Elementary, and soccer field development standards and design. The plan will be presented to Spenard Community Council and then back to the Commission for review.

No action was taken on this item by the Commission at this time.

D. PRC 09-10 Park Capital Funding Strategy

Beth Nordlund discussed the two resolutions proposed to the Commission in this item. One resolution supports the bonds system and one supports a long-term funding approach according to the "Eagle River" model, which is pay-as-you go funding for capital projects. The Department of Parks & Recreation recommends that the Commission pass a resolution to support the adoption of the "Eagle River" model of capital funding for existing facilities, and request that the Department draft a request to the Assembly that the 2010 capital budget include a request to voters to adopt the Eagle River model. Resolutions 2009-10a and 2009-10b were presented to the Commission for approval.

Commissioner Molozzi moved to accept proposed Resolution 2009-10a.

Commissioner Crosby seconded.

Motion to approve passed unanimously.

After more discussion amongst the commissioners and staff regarding the various projects listed in the staff report and the funding sources for those projects,

Commissioner Mollozzi moved to accept proposed Resolution 2009-10b but to strike paragraph 3, which provides for a 10-year sunset clause, from the proposed 2009-10b resolution.

Commissioner Crosby seconded.

Motion to approve passed unanimously

VII. STAFF REPORTS

A. PRC 09-15 Superintendent's Report

Monique Anderson, Park Superintendent, made a brief statement to the Commission regarding the projects going on in Parks & Recreation, and then announced her resignation from Parks & Recreation. Her last day of employment will be March 20. Ms. Anderson's contributions to Parks & Recreation have been greatly appreciated and will be missed by the Commission and the Parks & Recreation Department.

Chris Conlon spoke to the Commission about the schedule of programs the Department has to offer this summer – programs at Spenard Recreation Center, Russian Jack/Lidia Selkregg Chalet, Fairview Recreation Center, and Goose Lake, as well as outdoor recreational opportunities, onsite school recreation programs, and summer school programs. He also discussed the proposed Park Ranger program and how that program is envisioned to be a public outreach, education and a positive, visible presence in our parks.

B. PRC 09-16 Anchorage Park Foundation Report

Beth Nordlund reported on the neighborhood park projects anticipated for this summer, the 2009 Parks bond being offered to Anchorage voters on April 7, YEP program, and the Annual Giving Campaign.

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Commissioner Crosby gave the Aquatics Committee report on the status of the energy study on the pools and the status of work to be done on the Service and Bartlett pools.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.