



**MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION**

REGULAR MEETING

May 14, 2009 Minutes



I. CALL TO ORDER

Prior to the Call to Order, a film presentation was made by the Anchorage Park Foundation. The film was a documentary and history of Anchorage Parks created by Meg Mielke and Esther Smith, student interns from Chugiak High School. Ms. Mielke and Ms. Smith then spoke to the Commission about their project and answered questions from the Commissioners.

The meeting was called to order at 6:15 p.m. on Thursday, May 14, 2009, at the Lidia Selkregg Chalet.

II. ROLL CALL

Roll call taken by Director Jeff Dillon

Commissioners Present:

Chairperson Kathleen Plunkett
Commissioner Allyson Beischer
Commissioner Tim Benintendi
Commissioner Sara Boario
Commissioner Peter Crosby
Commissioner Eric McCallum
Commissioner Victor Mollozzi
Commissioner David Wigglesworth

Commissioners Excused:

Commissioner Zareena Clendaniel
Commissioner Dan Frank
Commissioner Meagan Krupa

Staff Present

Jeff Dillon, Director
Beth Nordlund, Deputy Director
Holly Spoth-Torres
Brad Dunker
Scott Stringer
Diana Cramer

III. Consent Agenda

No changes to the Agenda or the Minutes of the April 2009 meeting were made. Commissioner Molozzi moved to approve the Consent Agenda and April 2009 minutes. Seconded by Commissioner McCallum
Motion to approve passed unanimously.

IV. Director's Comments

Director Jeff Dillon discussed the transition taking place as we prepare for a new Mayor to take office on July 1, 2009. He discussed the challenges faced by the Department, the most significant of which is the budget reduction.

Mr. Dillon next discussed the Kincaid Project budget shortages and difficulties that the project has experienced, and the efforts being made to obtain more funding to work out those difficulties and ensure that this project is a success.

Mr. Dillon announced his resignation effective July 1, 2009, after five years as Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation.

Mr. Dillon then excused himself and turned the meeting over to Beth Nordlund and Holly Spoth-Torres.

V. Information Items

A. PRC 09-23 Urban Forest Management Plan

Scott Stringer, Municipal Forester, provided an overview of the Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP), explained the purpose and goals of the plan, and detailed the major areas the plan addresses. The UFMP was initiated by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry and funded by a USDA Forest Service grant. The primary goal is to facilitate the Municipality of Anchorage's ongoing commitment to

maintain, enhance and preserve Anchorage's tree canopy in a safe, strategic approach to long-term sustainability. Anchorage has never before had a formal tree care program or a staff member dedicated to managing the urban forest. The Urban Forestry program currently is housed with the Horticulture Division and assumes many of the landscape issues previously dealt with by Horticulture.

B. PRC 09-25 Firewise Project Plan

Sue Rodman, Anchorage Fire Department Forester, discussed the 2009 Firewise projects which are intended to mitigate the risk and hazard of wildfires in the area of the Campbell Creek Trail and Russian Jack Park. These are areas of high fire risk due to the native black spruce trees and the presence of illegal campers. Spruce bark beetle killed trees will be removed and black spruce trees otherwise thinned and pruned to promote healthy trees. These projects will limit the available fuel for illegal camp fires and increase visibility in the forest. Work began in early May.

VI. Action Items

A. PRC 09-24 Margaret Eagan Sullivan Park Playground

Brad Dunker, Anchorage Creeks Coordinator, gave the background and history behind the staff recommendation to construct a playground in Margaret Eagan Sullivan Park next to the Covey Café. The need for a playground within the South Addition neighborhood has been shown, the project has been driven by the South Addition Community Council's efforts, and Parks & Recreation supports the project. Based upon the community-driven nature of the project and overwhelming community support, staff recommends the approval of the concept allowing a playground to be located to the north of Covey Café in Margaret Eagan Sullivan Park.

There was no public comment on this item.

After discussion amongst the staff and Commissioners, Commissioner Molozzi moved to approve Resolution 2009-20, Margaret Eagan Sullivan Park Future Playground. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Benintendi. Motion to approve passed unanimously.

**Resolution No. 2009-20
Margaret Eagan Sullivan Park Future Playground**

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission serves in an advisory capacity to both the Mayor and the Assembly; and

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission has the responsibility and duty to provide for the long term vision of our park system by ensuring that a balance of parks, natural resources, and recreation facilities provides for the health, welfare, and safety of all residents of the Anchorage Bowl; and

WHEREAS the Westchester Lagoon area of the South Addition Community Council does not have a playground for children and Community Council members have advocated for a playground in Margaret Eagan Sullivan Park for several years, and

WHEREAS, the South Addition Community Council and its members have lobbied to achieve a state legislative appropriation for design development of a playground and a local landscape architect has provided a preliminary conceptual sketch on a pro-bono basis; and

WHEREAS, the South Addition Community Council has approved a resolution supporting the concept of a future playground near Covey Café and is working diligently toward its fruition.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission recommends the Municipality of Anchorage pursue the concept of a future playground located in the area beside the Covey Café/Trail Watch Building at the North end of Margaret E Sullivan Park.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission this 14th day of May, 2009.

B. PRC 09-26 University Lake Trail Rehabilitation

Commissioner Wigglesworth requested he be excused from commenting on or participating in any discussion on this Action Item or voting on that issue due to a potential conflict of interest stemming from his employment with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. He was excused.

Holly Spoth-Torres, Park Development & Natural Resources Manager, discussed the proposed trail rehabilitation projects in University Lake Park. There are three proposed projects. Project 1 involves 1400 feet of trail to be rehabilitated including regrading and resurfacing; Project 2 will define better pedestrian routes and rehabilitation to reduce muddy conditions; and Project 3 will reroute a "social trail" along the stream bank to reduce erosion, and allow reclamation of the existing, eroding trail. A professional trail

builder will be employed on Project 1, and the work on Projects 2 and 3 will be completed by the Youth Employment in Parks crews and volunteers. The trails will be managed by Alaska Trails. Tudor Centre Trust, a successful Anchorage Park Foundation Challenge Grantee, has secured the majority of the funding for the project. Staff recommends approval of this project.

Discussion then ensued among the Commissioners, with questions directed to and answered by Ms. Spoth-Torres, after which Commissioner Benintendi moved that the Commission adopt Resolution 2009-21, University Lake Trail Rehabilitation, as submitted.

Commissioner Crosby seconded the motion.

Motion to approve passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 2009-21
University Lake Trail Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission serves in an advisory capacity to both the Mayor and the Assembly; and

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission has the responsibility and duty to provide for the long term vision of our park system by ensuring that a balance of parks, natural resources, and recreation facilities provides for the health, welfare, and safety of all residents of the Anchorage Bowl; and

WHEREAS, the University Lake Park area of the University Area Community Council is one of Anchorage's most heavily used Community Parks in the heart of the U-Med District; and

WHEREAS, as the medical and educational campuses surrounding University Lake Park continue to grow and offer increased services to Alaskans and the Anchorage Community, the adjacent parkland and trails become more essential to U-Med visitors, employees and students; and,

WHEREAS, the park services multiple uses in both the winter and the summer as there is heavy use of the trails for cross-country skiing in the winter; and

WHEREAS, the University Area Community Council and its members have are in favor of University Lake Park trail rehabilitation as developed by the Department;

THE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION RESOLVES:

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission recommends the Municipality of Anchorage:

- Rehabilitate identified trails around University Lake Park improving connectivity for all park users;
- Establish an accessible Healthy Walking Loop from the Alaska Native Medical Center Campus
- Improve Signage and Park amenities.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Parks and Recreation Commission this 14th day of May, 2009.

C. PRC 09-27 Far North Bicentennial Park – Trail Improvement Plan

Holly Spoth-Torres, Park Development & Natural Resources Manager, gave an overview of the previous presentations made to the Commission in March and April of 2009, referring Commissioners to the staff report PRC 09-18 and its attachments for project background, goals, process, and overview of public comments. She, Kevin Doniere of Land Design North, and Brad Dunker then answered questions from the Commissioners prior to the public comment period.

Public Comment Summary

Thirty-three people provided public comment:

1. Peter Van Tuyn: Speaking as an individual and as an advocate of trails, he supports the trails and encourages strict regulations of horses on the new trails.
2. Ken Robertson: Speaking as an individual, he supports the trails – “bigger is not better.” The beauty of the Campbell track is in the intimacy. He likes the small trails and believes use by horses needs to be segregated.
3. Cameron Benbenek: Speaking as an individual, he supports the Phase 2 trail plan.
4. Valanne Gloschenko: Speaking as an individual, he believes we should stay away from the bear corridors and put the trails elsewhere.
5. Wayne Hall: Speaking as an individual, he states he has submitted written comments. He believes information in the draft plan is insufficient, inaccurate and incomplete. He does not support the plan and prefers a “no action” alternative.

6. Marilyn Houser: Speaking as an individual, she believes the park is being sliced and diced to death. She does not support widespread bicycle use, and she does not support Project # 24, Singletrack Phase 2. She believes it is foolish to put trails in the bear corridors, and supports seasonal closure of trails like Rover's Run/Mellon's Way. She supports no development in the northeast section of the park and would like to see #18 designated for no new trail development. She wants salmon stocking of Campbell Creek stopped. She would like to see an estimate on the amount of trees/vegetation to be cleared. She believes the process is being rushed and encourages the Commission to delay action on this plan.
7. Ann Gabler and Ted Trueblood: Representing Basher Community Council, their comments concentrated on Basher Road safety. The road is dangerous. They want the road improved and made safer, and want trail improvement to take into account the road issues. The road needs to be improved before the trails are improved and attract more people to the area. They believe trail projects need to be done in tandem with road improvement projects. Basher Community Council does not support Project # 24.
8. Rosemary Austin: Speaking as an individual, she supports Singletrack Phase 2.
9. Janice Tower: Representing Singletrack Advocates. Obviously she supports the Singletrack Phase 2 project. It's a shovel-ready project. Basher Community Council first resolved to support the project, then after the bear activity in 2008, changed its position. Trail activity will be restricted to the north side of Campbell Airstrip Road, essentially eliminating half of the original proposed project; trails will be moved down hill out of the line of sight of residents. No new trailheads will be built.
10. Bruce Ross: Speaking as an individual, he believes Phase 1 Singletrack trails are a very nice addition to his neighborhood, and supports Phase 2.
11. Joe Pollock: Speaking as an individual and bear-attack survivor, he supports Singletrack Phase 2.
12. Chet Fehrmann: Speaking as an individual, he states that designed trails are better than bandit trails, and he supports the singletrack trails.
13. Jack Walker: Speaking as an individual, he is also a member of Basher Community Council. He does not support Project 24 and urges that the Commission take no action on this plan.

14. Heather Rice: Speaking as an individual, states that she supports singletrack trails. She too has submitted written comments and wants more information on the plan. She would like to know how many miles are allotted to different trails; how many trails are for each use, *i.e.*, bikes, equestrian, etc.; what is the disturbance to the environment of each trail; and why certain projects are selected and others are not? She would like more specification in the trail classes as to the desired use of each trail as trail widths vary within one class depending on desired use.
15. Trond Jensen: Represents Arctic Orienteering Club which strongly supports the no-trails areas of the park and supports improvements to Campbell Airstrip Road at mile 1.1. The Club is concerned about unauthorized trails (bandit trails) in the park diminishing the value of the park. They would like park left as it is with as little development as possible.
16. Gordon Wetzel: Representing Nordic Ski Association of Anchorage, NSAA believes the trails in Far North Bicentennial Park are used more than the trails at Kincaid, probably because more people live close to the park. Mr. Wetzel states that the entire Anchorage School District uses the trails for skiing and that these are the premier ski trails in Anchorage. It is imperative to maintain trails designated for skiing. NSAA wants designated uses for the trails – especially ski-only trails. Tread repair, drainage improvements, etc., are not projects these are required maintenance for the trails.
17. Eric G. Follett: Speaking as an individual, he is an avid trail user and orienteer. He commends Holly and Kevin's work on the plan and believes the plan is a terrific compromise between user groups. Although basically opposed to trails, he loves the Phase 1 trails. Orienteers use those trails. The plan will make the park a better place and should be passed as-is.
18. Bruce Talbot: Represents the Anchorage Skijor Club. The Club provides trail grooming in the park and believes design parameters/trail classifications need to be tweaked, as grooming equipment cannot be used on some of the trails because they are not wide enough. The plan needs to revisit the trail classification system parameters. The Club supports the trail trunk system, the new trails, and modification of the existing skijoring trails.
19. Steve Ryan: Speaking as an individual, he supports the general idea of the plan, but would like to replace some of what is being taken away. He also supports Singletrack trails. He said if we shouldn't have trails in wildlife areas, and all of Anchorage is bear country, then we shouldn't have trails anywhere in Anchorage. He would like to see stricter equestrian use guidelines.

20. Steve Tower: Speaking as an individual believes the overall plan is well studied and presented, and encourages that the plan be accepted in its entirety without picking it apart for certain pet interests. One deficiency he noted is that the plan doesn't define equestrian uses. Equestrian uses need to be controlled, and trails developed for equestrian use only. He doesn't think fear of bears should control trail development.
21. Alan Baldiviess: Speaking as an individual, he supports Singletrack trails.
22. P.J. Hill: Speaking as an individual, he states there are good trails in far North Bicentennial Park and he supports making good trails. He believes the plan needs to address user/equestrian conflicts and work out a way to minimize those conflicts.
23. Tony Allen: Speaking as an individual, he supports the singletrack trails.
24. Tim Woody: Speaking as an individual, he is a member of Singletrack Advocates. He believes people need to take responsibility for their own safety while using the park, and he supports the plan.
25. John Weddleton, Friends of Far North Bicentennial Park: His organization believes the park should be maintained as a natural area for future generations according to the original transfer documents. The subject plan does not meet this goal. The organization wants no lighted trails and no pavement in the park.
26. Bill Berder: Speaking as an individual, he is a member of NSAA, and supports the singletrack trails Phase 2.
27. Adam Bartlett: Speaking as an individual, he supports the Singletrack Advocates Phase 2; he doesn't want lights in the park.
28. Hugh McPeck: Speaking as an individual, he believes we should keep trails out of the bear corridors, and that development of the park should not be rushed.
29. Jack Mosby: Speaking as an individual, he believes that the plan is a pretty good start. The trail classification system helps both users and managers understand the character and design of the trails. He would like to see some examples of the Trail Management Objectives for clarification.
30. Darcy Davis: Speaking as an individual, she generally supports the plan and Singletrack Phase 2.
31. Sam Bartlett: Speaking as an individual, he states he likes to use the trails, supports the trail system, and would rather take his chances with bears over cars.

32. Ann Gabler: Speaking as an individual, she opposes Project 24. She believes hiking and nature trails need to be designated in the park, as well as more designated natural areas.
33. Doug Lewis: Speaking as an individual, he commends the job being done by Parks & Recreation to balance uses in the park, and thanks Parks & Recreation for including mountain bikers as a user group. He supports the Singletrack trails.

After a lengthy discussion and question-answer session between Commissioners and staff, the process for incorporating edits and amendments into the Draft Plan was discussed. Staff recommended the formation of a subcommittee to thoroughly review the Plan, public comments, oral public comments from this meeting and to develop an addendum to the Plan. The addendum would be presented to the Commission for discussion and resolution in June, after which it will be forwarded along with the Draft Plan to the Urban Design Commission. Public comment would be heard as part of the Urban Design Commission process. After Urban Design approval, a Final Plan would be developed.

Commissioner Benintendi moved that a subcommittee be established to work with Parks & Recreation staff on creating an addendum to the Far North Bicentennial Park – Trail Improvement Plan.

Commissioner Crosby seconded the motion.

Commissioner Benintendi, Commissioner Wigglesworth, and Commissioner Frank were chosen for the subcommittee.

Motion for the subcommittee passed unanimously.

VII. Staff Reports

A. PRC 09-21 Superintendents' Report

Commissioners were referred to the Superintendents' Report in their packets.

B. Anchorage Park Foundation Report

Beth Nordlund encouraged the Commissioners to volunteer for park projects and to participate in park events this summer.

VIII. Appearance Requests

There were no appearance requests.

IX. Committee Reports

There were no committee reports.

X. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Crosby stated he will be away in June, but would like to participate in the Commission meeting telephonically.

Commissioner McCallum announced his resignation from the Parks & Recreation Commission effective May 25, 2009.

XI. Upcoming Meeting

Next Commission meeting will be held at 6:00 p.m., Thursday, June 11, 2009, at Spenard Recreation Center.

XII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 10:35 p.m.

MINUTES APPROVED this 11 day
of June, 2009:



Director, Parks & Recreation



Chair, Parks & Recreation Commission