



**MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION**

**MINUTES OF THE
REGULAR MEETING**

August 8, 2019



I. Call to Order

The August 8, 2019 meeting of the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission, held at Spenard Recreation Center, was called to order by Acting Chair Erin Kirkland at 6:00 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Roll call was taken by John Rodda, Director of Parks and Recreation.

Commissioners present:

Commissioner Kelly Chang
Commissioner Grace Johnston
Commissioner Erin Kirkland
Commissioner Eric Milliken
Commissioner Alison Smith
Commissioner James Winchester

Commissioners absent:

Commissioner Jon Dyson
Commissioner Shannon Kuhn

A quorum was achieved with six members present.

Staff present:

John Rodda
Josh Durand
Steve Rafuse
Diana Cramer

III. Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Kirkland noted that a second information item was not on the printed Agenda received by Commissioners and should be added to the Agenda. That item is "PRC 19-10 Assembly Request – Consider Sanctioned Camps on Parklands" was then added to the Agenda. Commissioner Kirkland then proposed that the order of the information should be reversed, with PRC 19-10 coming first and PRC 19-9 ("Herbicide Use to Control and Eradicate Mayday Trees in Anchorage Parks and Greenbelts") second. Upon motion made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Johnston, the Agenda, as amended, was unanimously approved.

IV. Approval of Minutes

Upon motion duly made by Commissioner Winchester and seconded by Commissioner Smith, the Minutes of the June 13, 2019 meeting were unanimously approved.

V. Director's Comments

Director John Rodda's comments included the following:

Homeless camp abatement continues with over 264 tons of material collected and taken to the city landfill so far this year. This is already 20 tons more than all of 2018.

There was a hand tram incident in Girdwood involving injury to a young Boy Scout who fell from the tram. He did sustain injuries but is expected to be okay.

Folker Park ADA playground was completed.

Mayor's Marathon: JBER was going to remove the Bulldog Bridge, which is east of Muldoon on the Ft. Richardson border and which the Mayor's Marathon race route crosses. After negotiations between JBER and Mayor's Marathon officials, they have agreed to leave the bridge in place during the race, and remove it afterwards. Discussions about how to handle this continue.

Renovations and repairs at Mulcahy Park are still in progress. The box seats are in and work on the infield is beginning.

Director Rodda also announced that he will be retiring on September 30, 2019.

VI. Appearance Requests

There were no appearance requests for non-agenda items.

VII. Action Items

There were no action items on the agenda.

VIII. Information Items

PRC 10-10 Assembly Request – Consider Sanctioned Camps on Parklands

Presented by Meg Zalatel, Anchorage Assembly Member

Anchorage Assembly Member Meg Zalatel requests that this Commission look into whether or not there should be sanctioned camps on public lands in Anchorage. This Commission is asked to consider the current impact on Parks and Recreation, what changes might be needed in the Municipal Code, what would work, what wouldn't work, receive public input, and then make a referral back to the Committee on Homelessness by November. She asked if Commissioners feel that November is a reasonable amount of time so that the Committee on Homelessness can also consider any concentrated or budgetary impacts to the 2020 budget.

Commissioner Chang noted that this issue would benefit from multiple agency involvement, not just Parks and Recreation.

Commissioner Milliken asked if there is a current estimate of the number of campers. Director Rodda responded that the Municipality does periodic "point-in-time" counts and the next one is scheduled for August 19. He did not have the numbers from the last count available at the meeting. The August 19 count will provide a relative frame of reference and would be compared to previously counts.

Four individuals provided comments for the Commission's consideration:

1. Russ Webb stated that he thinks the sanctioned camps may be an appropriate thing for our community to do at some point but that it is premature for consideration by the Parks and Recreation Commission, and cited various issues and questions that need to be addressed.

2. Stephanie Rhoades does not believe that the Parks and Recreation Commission is the right group to do the work needed to address this proposal.

Sanctioned camps have no relationship to the work done by Parks and Recreation. Engaging the public and establishing public policy is the purview of the Mayor and the Assembly.

3. Dana Dardis is one of the organizers of the camp that was started to protest the Governor's budget. What they were planning as a 3-day protest became an encampment. There is a need for a safe, permanent camp for individuals who are truly homeless.

4. David Wigglesworth feels that there is a need for sanctioned camps, but believes that the people in the protest camp are really looking for a building. He suggested the Commission should go back to the Assembly and tell them that this is not an issue for Parks and Recreation only, that other agencies need to be involved.

Director Rodda then states that he does not see Parks and Recreation taking the lead in this endeavor. It is not a social services, health and medical, intervention or public safety agency. He does not believe it is Parks and Recreation's role to determine all the variables, the needs, and issues surrounding this proposal. He recommends not making any kind of decision or recommendation at this time until a specific proposal is made so that the Parks and Recreation Commission can actually look at something substantial and consider the impacts on park lands.

Commissioner Kirkland then stated that this is something about which the Commission needs more information to consider before it could provide a recommendation.

**PRC 19-09, Herbicide Use to Control and Eradicate Mayday Trees
in Anchorage Parks and Greenbelts
Presented by: Steve Rafuse, Park Planner**

Mr. Rafuse introduced this item and invited an array of stakeholders to speak regarding the use of herbicides in eradication of mayday trees in our greenbelts. This is an opportunity for the Commission to hear from individuals and organizations, ask questions, and then at a future meeting work with the Parks and Recreation Department to essentially advise on the appropriate action to take as it pertains to use of herbicides in our park system.

The mayday tree (*Prunus padus*), also known as chokecherry or European bird cherry, is a highly invasive species found in Anchorage's greenbelts. They were introduced several decades ago as a hardy ornamental tree and became popular in residential landscaping. Overtime, the trees have crowded out native vegetation along stream corridors leading to changes in the natural ecosystem. Efforts in recent years to

eradicate Mayday trees in Anchorage's greenbelts through cultural, mechanical and biological methods have proven largely ineffective. The Parks and Recreation Department is being asked to consider the use of select herbicides in parks and along greenbelts to assist in the eradication of Mayday trees and asks the Commission to provide guidance. Two public hearings of the Parks and Recreation Commission are scheduled for this topic. The first hearing was at this August meeting as an information item and then a second hearing at the September Commission meeting where Commission will make a recommendation in the form of a resolution to the Department. Mr. Rafuse then provided background information and more information on the herbicides proposed to be used. This information was also contained in the Commissioners' monthly meeting materials.

Also presenting information to the Commissioners were Tim Stallard, Rick Sinnott, and Hans Thompson:

- Tim Stallard is the current chair of Anchorage Cooperative Weed Management Area (ANC-CWMA), discussed why invasive species cause harm to our environment and the harm caused by the mayday trees in Anchorage. He discussed the difficulty in removing mayday trees – if they are pulled or cut down, they just grow back more vigorously – and why prevention and manual control are not effective. He states that unfortunately the use of herbicides is the only option left. Mr. Stallard then answered questions from Commissioners about eradication methods, how it is controlled in other ecosystems, biocontrol, and what happens if we do nothing.
- Rick Sinott, Anchorage Watershed and Natural Resources Advisory Commission, provided more information about why mayday trees cause harm and further information on the herbicides proposed for use. The Anchorage Watershed and Natural Resources Advisory Commission supports the use of the herbicides to eradicate the mayday trees.
- Hans Thompson, South Addition Community Council, supports the use of herbicides to eradicate the mayday trees.

Public testimony was given by the following individuals:

1. Kate Du Plessis, speaking as an individual, does not support use of herbicides in our community at all. She believes there are other ways to control invasive plant species.

2. Cherie Northon, director of the Anchorage Waterways Council, supports the removal of mayday trees but feels that chemical controls should be used as a last-ditch effort only after other means of control have been exhausted. She stated that even then the benefits of chemical should far outweigh the detriment to the native environment. If the proposed chemical can escape into the waterways or affect native vegetation, or harm beneficial terrestrial insects, then it cannot support its application. If the existence of the invasive species is believed to be more harmful than the side effects of a chemical used to eradicate it then the Council would support a limited trial run with quantitative proof of its benefits outweighing its detriments. Until such proof is provided in Anchorage's unique environment, the Council cannot support a full-scale application of it.
3. Sally Gibert, speaking as an individual, does not use pesticides or herbicides on her own property. There is a time and place for herbicide use and the mayday trees are out of control, so she supports the use of herbicides in the right circumstances.
4. Cathy Gleason, Turnagain Community Council, took issue with the Watershed Natural Resources Advisory Commission recommendation that Parks & Recreation reconsider its policy that requires approval of all adjacent community councils before a non-allowed herbicide may be approved to control an invasive species in parks and greenbelts. She proposes that the councils be given notice when these herbicides are proposed to be used and allowed a reasonable time to express their concerns or support. As an individual, she believes there are many questions that need to be answered before allowing the use of herbicides.
5. Frank Gwartney supports the use of herbicides. He described the U.S. Forest Services' program in Hope, Alaska. About four years ago he started working with the U.S. Forest Service to eradicate the trees on his property. He believes the Forest Service program in Hope is successful and Hope now has a healthy forest. He further stated his belief that without the use of glyphosate you will not eradicate the maydays. They will take over and they will absolutely displace native plants.
6. Pam Miller, Alaska Community Action on Toxics, does not support the use of herbicides. All of the proposed herbicides have adverse effects on non-targeted species, animals, people, and aquatic species. Her group urges the precautionary protective and solution oriented approach that does not require the use of harmful herbicides.

7. Dana Dardis says that chemicals respect no boundaries. She believes there are many health consequences involved with use of herbicides and urges the Department to look into other methods that will not harm our health.
8. Gino Graziano works for the University of Alaska at Fairbanks with the Cooperative Extension Service, where he is part of the integrative pest management program and works on forest health issues and invasive species. He has been doing ongoing research projects dealing with the European bird cherry, *Prunus padus*, and control with herbicides. He believes the use of herbicides in the manner that has been proposed will actually really minimize exposure. He supports this program.

This item will be presented to Commissioners as an action item at the September 2019 meeting.

IX. Commissioner Comments

There were no commissioner comments.

X. Upcoming Meeting

The next meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting is scheduled for 6:00 p.m., Thursday, September 12, 2019, at Spenard Recreation Center.

XI. Adjournment

Upon motion duly made by Commissioner Smith, seconded by Commissioner Johnston, and unanimously approved, the meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.