



MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING
September 10, 2009



CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Kathleen Plunkett at 6:04 p.m. on Thursday, September 10, 2009, at Spenard Recreation Center.

I. Roll Call

Roll call taken by John Rodda, Director of Parks & Recreation

Commissioners Present:

Chairperson Kathleen Plunkett
Commissioner Allyson Beischer
Commissioner Tim Benintendi
Commissioner Sara Boario
Commissioner Peter Crosby
Commissioner Dan Frank
Commissioner Meagan Krupa
Commissioner David Wigglesworth

Commissioners Excused:

Commissioner Zareena Clendaniel
Commissioner Michael Fredericks
Commissioner Victor Mollozzi

Staff Present:

John Rodda
Chris Conlon
Holly Spoth-Torres
Cathy Janigo
Elizabeth Stanley
Diana Cramer

II. Consent Agenda

No changes to the Agenda or the Minutes of the August 2009 meeting were made. Commissioner Crosby moved to accept the Minutes and the Agenda. Commissioner Benintendi seconded. Unanimously approved.

III. Director's Comments

John Rodda, newly-appointed Director of Parks & Recreation, introduced himself to the Commissioners, gave some background about himself, and generally discussed his methods of operation and his vision for Parks & Recreation. Director Rodda pointed out that anyone who was not getting a response from Parks & Recreation staff should call him. All employees will return telephone calls without exception.

IV. Appearance Requests

There were no appearance requests.

V. Information Items

Reorganization, Anchorage Park Foundation, Operating Budget, and Capital Budget

Director Rodda discussed the reorganization of the Parks & Recreation Department, and the Department's response to the budget reductions overall and the various money-saving ideas being investigated. There will be a reduction in staff. There will be a reallocation of human resources. Overall the Department will be looking at what it can do better or more efficiently, and will do everything possible to maintain a presence and service at all park facilities, including the pools. Mr. Rodda said the role of the Anchorage Park Foundation in the Department will change from that of a driving force to a partnership arrangement. The volunteer component of Parks & Recreation for horticulture, park maintenance, and forestry projects will be consolidated to facilitate better scheduling and utilization of volunteer resources. "Back to basics" is the theme; taking care of our facilities as efficiently as possible.

There was discussion between Mr. Rodda and the Commissioners about the Blue Ribbon Committee idea to get the input of the Commissioners and others, about keeping the Commission informed regarding park activities and projects, and the role of the Commission in general.

Holly Spoth-Torres, Park Development & Natural Resources Manager, presented and outline of the capital budget for 2010. It does not appear that there will be a park bond presented to voters in 2010. Neighborhood parks, area-wide trails, and park maintenance are the focus – fixing what we have. Funding will be requested from the State of Alaska. In addition, there is money from old bonds and state grants for these items, as well as money available from Anchorage Park Foundation. The available funds are those that have not yet been expended and money for unfinished projects. It is anticipated that fund raising for the trail projects in Far North Bicentennial Park will be successful. In addition, there is some money available for facility upgrades at Spenard Recreation Center and Fairview Recreation Center.

Discussion was had between the Commissioners and staff regarding urban forestry and creek bank restoration as a component of basic park maintenance. Commissioner Wigglesworth suggested that these items present an opportunity for additional funding for the Department and the Anchorage Park Foundation as well.

There was discussion regarding the recruitment and use of volunteer resources, and the neighborhood park fix-it program in general.

V. Staff Reports

Chris Conlon, Recreation Superintendent, and Cathy Janigo, Development Director, discussed the pools and the input received from a recent public meeting and online survey. There was much discussion regarding the pools – keeping them open for school programs, swim lessons, and competitive swimming; the cost of utilities; and staffing issues.

Another topic of discussion was the confusing method in which park projects are handled. Mr. Rodda says the intent of the reorganization is to streamline communication, coordination, and allocation of resources.

There was more discussion about budget cuts and the role of the Anchorage Park Foundation in park activities, as well as the budget component of projects that come before the Commission. Mr. Rodda states that from now on, if we don't have a budget, we don't have a project. Nothing will be put on the table before the Commission that Parks & Recreation is not prepared to support. Park bonds were discussed, as well as increased user fees as a way to meet rising costs. Commissioner Frank asked about the possibility of giving up some of our park land as a way to focus the Department's resources. Mr. Rodda expressed his opposition to disposal of any park land.

Another component of our budget is taking care of the roadways on streets and roads that are built with municipal bonds. Every tree that is planted is a maintenance issue for

the future. Highways are built by the State, and the Municipality is asked to agree to maintain the roadways. These Transferred Responsibility Agreements are a burden to the Municipality.

Chris Conlon talked about the new Fall Activity Guide, which is “paperless” this season in order to save money. It is available online under Parks & Recreation/Recreation. There is one guide for recreation programs, activities and general information, and one guide for aquatics programs.

VI. Committee Reports

Commissioner Crosby invited everyone to come out to see the newly renovated and remodeled Service Pool and Bartlett Pool.

VII. Commissioner Comments

Chair Plunkett discussed the Department of Transportation’s disposal of chunks of asphalt from their DeBarr Road project on park land. Mr. Rodda says the Department is working with DOT to get that taken care of.

Commissioner Boario described the Chugach Children’s Forest and National Public Lands Day, and invited the Commissioners and staff to an event being held to launch the Chugach Children’s Forest on September 25, 2009.

The Agenda for the October meeting was discussed and suggested items were presented by the Commissioners. The expiration of the terms of some commissioners, the method for getting reappointed as a commissioner, and the election of officers was also briefly discussed. The expiration terms and time for election of officers needs to be determined.

There is a new Commissioner, Michael Fredericks, an architect with RIM People, who will be joining the commission. She was unable to attend this evening.

V. Adjournment

After parting comments by Director Rodda, Commissioner Wigglesworth moved to adjourn. Seconded by Commissioner Frank. Unanimously approved.

Meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

MINUTES APPROVED this ___ day of
_____, 2009:



Director, Parks & Recreation



Chair, Parks & Recreation Commission