



MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

**MINUTES OF THE
REGULAR MEETING**

December 8, 2011



I. CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission was called to order by Chair Joey Caterinichio at 6:05 p.m., Thursday, December 8, 2011, at Spenard Recreation Center.

II. Roll Call

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

Commissioners present:

Commissioner Tim Benintendi
Commissioner Joey Caterinichio
Commissioner Marion Davis
Commissioner Peter Murphy
Commissioner Richard Mystrom
Commissioner Carl Propes
Commissioner Harlow Robinson

Commissioners absent/excused:

Commissioner Jon Dyson
Commissioner Michael Fredericks

A quorum was present.

Staff Present:

John Rodda
Holly Spoth-Torres
Chris Conlon
Diana Cramer

III. Election of Officers

After discussion amongst the commissioners, new officers were elected. The new Chair is Joey Caterinichio; the new Vice-Chair is Carl Propes.

IV. Consent Agenda

A. Agenda

Upon motion made by Commissioner Benintendi and seconded by Commissioner Robinson, the Agenda for this meeting was unanimously approved.

B. Minutes of November Meeting

Upon motion made by Commissioner Benintendi and seconded by Commissioner Robinson, the Minutes of the November 10, 2011 meeting were unanimously approved.

V. Directors Comments

Director John Rodda addressed a question from Commissioner Mystrom regarding the activities of Occupy Anchorage in our parks. The Department has been working amicably with Occupy Anchorage to move them from the middle of the holiday activities at Town Square, and Occupy Anchorage has agreed to move and has moved its “campsite” to the Delaney Park Strip. As weather has worsened, fewer and fewer people are participating in Occupy Anchorage’s activities.

An ongoing project for the Department is the Kincaid cleanup. The remediation has been completed and the contamination capped. Environmental Protection Agency requirements have been met and EPA approval is expected to be received in the near future. There is litigation pending between the entities involved in the Kincaid Project.

Both the capital and operating budgets were passed by the Anchorage Assembly. An amendment to the budget to fund the Recreation Division’s programmer positions passed. Two Maintenance Division positions were not funded.

VI. Anchorage Park Foundation

There was no report from the Anchorage Park Foundation.

VII. Action Item: PRC 11-53 West Anchorage District Plan

Thede Tobish, Senior Planner with the Municipality of Anchorage Planning Department, who is been the project manager for the West Anchorage District Plan (WADP), provided an overview and summary of the Plan being presented to the Commission. The Plan addresses many issues specific to West Anchorage, including parks and trails within the plan area, and the relationship between Parks and Recreation and Ted Stevens International Airport. Included in the recommendations are possible land exchanges between Parks and recreation and the Airport. These proposed land exchanges could impact the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, Pt. Woronzof Park, Spenard Beach Park, Connors Bog, and other parkland in West Anchorage. Parks and Recreation staff supports the recommendations of the WADP and asks the Commission

for a resolution supporting the findings and recommendations of the West Anchorage District Plan.

Public Appearances

1. Frank Keen opposes the proposed land exchanges and strongly supports protection of the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail and Pt. Woronzof Park.

2. Chris Habitch, Turnagain Community Council Vice President, advises that the Council does not endorse the West Anchorage District Plan as currently presented in the public hearing draft. Specific objection was taken to designating all airport property, even those park lands and public areas such as Spenard Beach Park, Little Campbell Lake Park and Turnagain Bog, as Major Transportation Facility when in fact they should be designated "Other Areas that Function as Parks and Natural Resources" to accurately reflect the long-term community use of these lands. A written list of specific parcels that should be changed to this designation was given to commissioners.

3. Mike Coumbe would like to have any proposed land exchange that included the Coastal Trail and Pt. Woronzof Park removed from the Plan.

4. Rob Earl supports protection of the Pt. Woronzof Park as he believes this park land is needed in West Anchorage.

5. Robert Shipley spoke on behalf of the Anchorage Waterways Council. The Council's mission is to protect, restore and enhance the waterways, wetlands and associated uplands of Anchorage. He suggested that the language on pages 191 and 218 be changed from "manage, protect and enhance municipal parks, greenbelts and natural open space areas, fish and wildlife habitats, and wetland functions" and add to that statement "to acquire or otherwise support protection of non-municipal lands identified as high value natural areas by the public and scientific communities." The Council recommends that Turnagain Bog be designated as Highest Value Wetlands rather than Major Transportation Facility. The Council also recommends that high-value waterway and watershed lands currently used as park land by the community be included in "Other Areas that Function as Park and Natural Resource, including Connors Bog, Spenard Beach, DeLong Lake, and Little Campbell Lake. Finally, he stated the Council opposed any land exchange that would permit a north/south runway because of the impact on the Anchorage Coastal Refuge.

6. Margaret Auth spoke on behalf of the Spenard Community Council and as a WADP committee member. Of particular interest to this Council is the protection of the park land and the bogs. Spenard Beach is historically important to the community. Protection of the Coastal Trail is important. No land exchange involving Pt. Woronzof Park should be considered.

7. Robert Auth would particularly like to see Spenard Beach Park retained for public use.

8. Breck Tostevin is a member of the Turnagain Community Council and a WADP committee member. It is his opinion that lands like Little Campbell Lake, Connors Bog Park, and other parks like those are of no value to the Airport. They cannot develop those areas to build a runway. The only land the Airport wants is Pt. Woronzof Park. Acquire land from the Airport if necessary – pay them for the land but do not trade park land for those parcels.

9. Marilyn Houser advocates protection of the Coastal Trail, and all natural resource areas such as the Campbell Creek stream corridor, Earthquake Park wetlands, Fish Creek Estuary, Northwood Park, Jewel Lake, and Pt. Woronzof, and opposes any land exchange with the Airport that would include Pt. Woronzof Park. She opposes construction of another north/south runway because of its impacts on the Coastal Trail, dedicated park land, and the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge.

10. Chris Campbell is an archeologist concerned with the preservation of a Dena'ina archeological site located within Pt. Woronzof Park.

11. Cathy Gleason spoke as President of Turnagain Community Council. The Council would like to see all Heritage Land Bank lands west of the Airport conveyed to Parks and Recreation and designated as protected parkland. There are many elements of the Plan to which the Council objects, and Ms. Gleason provided these in writing to the Commission. The Council opposes the West Anchorage District Plan.

12. John Parrot is manager of Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport and discussed the Airport's support of the West Anchorage District Plan. Approval of the Plan sets the stage for discussions between the Airport and the Municipality for future responsible development of the Airport.

13. David Landry opposes the land exchange elements of the West Anchorage District Plan, calling it a "fool's bargain." The property proposed to be traded to the City is essentially valueless land for the Airport, whereas Pt. Woronzof Park and the Coastal Trail are extremely valuable to the Community.

Chair Caterinichio then closed public testimony on this Action Item.

Thede Tobish then provided answers to questions from the Commission and provided some follow-up to his earlier overview. After discussion amongst the Commissioners, it was decided that the Commissioners needed more time to consider all the information and testimony provided to them on the West Anchorage District Plan, at least until the January 12, meeting, or possibly until February. Upon motion made by Commissioner Murphy and seconded by Commissioner Mystrom, it was unanimously resolved that a decision and resolution on PRC 11-53 West Anchorage District Plan be postponed until the January 12, 2011 meeting, and that a subcommittee be formed to meet to discuss and research the subject, meet with Thede Tobish and John Parrott, if possible, and provide a report to the other commissioners prior to the January meeting. Committee

members will be: Peter Murphy, Harlow Robinson, Carl Propes, and Richard Mystrom. Joey Caterinichio will also participate. Any meeting of the committee will be publicly noticed.

VIII. Staff Reports

A. **Park Superintendent Report:** Holly Spoth-Torres, Park Superintendent, reported that hockey rinks, lakes, and ski trails were ready for public use and being maintained regularly by Park Maintenance and complimented the work being done by Park Maintenance.

B. **Recreation Superintendent Report:** Chris Conlon, Recreation Superintendent, spoke about the Assembly's passage of an amendment that would fund the Recreation Programmer positions, stating that this will allow the Recreation Division the opportunity to continue its programs in the community. A status report on activities at the recreation centers and swimming pools, and the permit office was provided to Commissioners.

IX. Committee Reports

There were no committee reports. There was discussion on how the committee formed to research the West Anchorage District Plan issue should proceed with its activities. The committee will meet as soon as possible, and include Thede Tobish and John Parrott in that meeting if possible, then provide its findings to the remaining commissioners.

X. Upcoming Meetings

The next meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission is scheduled for 6:00 p.m., January 12, 2012, at Spenard Recreation Center.

XI. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

MINUTES APPROVED this ___ day of _____, 2012:

Joey Caterinichio, Chair
Parks & Recreation Commission

John Rodda, Director
Parks & Recreation