



**MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION**

**MINUTES OF THE
REGULAR MEETING**



September 8, 2016

I. Call to Order

The September 8, 2016 regular meeting of the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission was called to order by Chair Jon Dyson at 6:00 p.m., at Spenard Recreation Center.

II. Roll Call

Roll call was taken by Josh Durand, Park Superintendent.

Commissioners present:

Commissioner James Balamaci
Commissioner Jon Dyson
Commissioner Michael McCambridge
Commissioner Peter Murphy
Commissioner Harlow Robinson
Commissioner James Winchester

Commissioners absent/excused:

Commissioner Richard Mystrom
Commissioner Levi Robinson
Commissioner Alison Smith

A quorum was present.

Staff present:

Josh Durand
Steve Rafuse
Diana Cramer

III. Consent Agenda

A. Agenda

Josh Durand, Park Superintendent, noted that Action Item PRC 16-25, Chugach Electric Easement in Far North Bicentennial Park, was withdrawn from the Agenda.

Upon motion duly made by Commissioner James Winchester and seconded by Commissioner James Balamaci, the revised Agenda for the September 8, 2016 meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission was unanimously approved.

B. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Upon motion duly made by Commissioner James Balamaci and seconded by Commissioner Michael McCormick, the Minutes of the July 14, 2016 meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission were unanimously approved.

IV. Director's Comments

Josh Durand, Park Superintendent, provided the following information on behalf of Director Rodda:

In response to recent unfortunate events at Valley of the Moon Park, and an increase in criminal activities at the Park and along the Chester Creek Trail corridor in that area, the Mayor is holding a community meeting this evening, at the same time as this meeting, at Valley of the Moon Park in order to address public concerns and gather public input regarding solutions to the problems in the Park. Mr. Rodda is in attendance at that meeting. In order to improve public safety, the Department has already undertaken thinning and removal of vegetation in order to improve sight lines in the Park, and is working on ways to improve lighting on the trail corridor.

Summer projects are nearing completion. The Russian Jack Skatepark is finished and opened for use. The skatepark has already seen heavy use and is considered a success. Barbara Street Park playground was completed two days ago, and Kiwanis Fish Creek Park, Kincaid Park, and Duldida Park are almost done.

The Department continues to work on cleaning up homeless camps. The amount of trash taken to Solid Waste has doubled since last year. This is partly due to an increase in the number of camps but also due to an increase in the number of maintenance staff hired to work specifically on cleanup. Staff cannot enter an "active" camp to clean it up. An active camp must be reported to APD, who then gives notice to

the campers that they have 15 days to move out. After that time, if the campers have moved on, maintenance staff can begin clean up.

V. Appearance Requests

There was one public appearance request on non-agenda items.

Marilyn Houser expressed concern about the clear-cutting of trees that was going on at the Hilltop ski area next to the Spencer Loop trail.

Mr. Durand responded that Hilltop Ski Area, which has a lease agreement with the Municipality of Anchorage, intended to expand their disc golf course and began clear-cutting in order to proceed with that plan. They cleared just under one acre of land between the northernmost ski run and the Spencer Loop Trail. Unfortunately, they are not allowed to do this under the terms of their lease agreement unless they go through the proper public process, including community council resolutions, Parks and Recreation approval, Parks and Recreation Commission resolution, municipal and state permits, etc. Hilltop management was contacted immediately and instructed to stop. They have been informed of the process that they must go through in order to get approval for their plan. At this time, Hilltop has to choose if it wishes to undertake the public process to gain municipal approval for their project, or commence mandatory reforestation of the cleared area to return it to its previous condition.

VI. Anchorage Park Foundation Report

There was no Anchorage Park Foundation report.

VII. Action Item

- A. PRC 16-24 University Lake Park Master Plan**
Resolution No. 2016-20
Presented by Steve Rafuse, Park Planner

Presentation

Using a Powerpoint presentation, Mr. Rafuse provided historical background on the University Lake Park property and development of the UMed district. Currently the Park encompasses 64 acres and features forested trails, open spaces, and access to University Lake and Chester Creek. It has become one of the most popular parks in Anchorage, with diverse uses. It includes an off-leash dog walking loop and a non-motorized multi-use trail corridor. Challenges faced range from shoreline erosion, park users using neighboring properties for recreation, and conflicts between humans, dogs

and wildlife. The Plan provides for future development, management and maintenance of the Park, and seeks to balance public recreation with environmental concerns.

Planning and public involvement was undertaken to ensure that the Master Plan is consistent with community desires and needs. The public process was led by Parks and Recreation and included stakeholder interviews, advisory group meetings, and public meetings.

The Master Plan largely maintains the Park as it exists today, with some improvements to existing facilities. It identifies six categories:

1. Retain the natural character. The public enjoys the Park as it is today and voiced strong preference for retaining the rustic, natural character of the park with minimal development.
2. Water quality, wildlife and natural resource management. Use of the Park has impacted natural resources. Erosion and shoreline degradation are common at access point to the lake and creek. Restoration and revegetation of degraded areas is needed. Public use must be balanced with preservation of the natural spaces and wildlife habitat. The plan recommends several strategies to improve water quality, protect flora and fauna, and continue public use.
3. Trails to support a variety of uses. The diversity of trail types makes this a popular park. Preserving the balance of paved multi-use trails and soft-surface trails, which includes the off-leash dog loop, is highly desired. Improvements to ensure a safe and firm walking surface and realignment of one trail to help eliminate conflicts between dogs and bicyclists is recommended.
4. Improved signage and wayfinding. Signage and wayfinding is unclear, leaving park users confused. This often leads to conflicts between user groups. Signage will be improved to help protect critical bird nesting and beaver habitat. Gateways, nodes and wayfinding signage will help clearly define trail types and use areas.
5. Parking to meet demand. Parking is an issue at University Lake Park. There is limited on-site parking. The Plan recommends parking be expanded to 50 spaces and that parking be moved to the east.
6. Maintenance and amenities. Regular maintenance and installation of new amenities will make the park more enjoyable for everyone. The Plan recommends regular trash pick-up, provision of restrooms, and installation of new amenities such as bear-proof trash cans, benches, mutt mitts, kiosks, signage, wayfinding and interpretive panels.

Summary

The Plan is the result of an extensive public involvement process and identifies and addresses issues and concerns, while attempting to balance the interest of all stakeholders and user groups. The Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department recommends approval of the University Lake Park Master Plan and requests that the Parks and Recreation Commission support the Plan by passing the proposed resolution.

Public Appearances

Five people spoke regarding the University Lake Park Master Plan.

Paul Stang, President of the University Lake Area Community Council. Mr. Stang stated that the Council supports the Plan but it is a conditional support. He provided a copy of the Council's resolution. There are three major concerns that the Council has: (1) Funding. In order to make this plan work we've got to supply the funding. (2) Monitoring. Activities in the park need to be monitored to watch what is really happening in the park. (3) Enforcement. In order to make people abide by park rules, enforcement is needed. If we begin issuing tickets to people who are not following the rules, word will get around and people will start complying.

Barbara Garner, member of the University Lake Area Community Council. Ms. Garner does not agree with the totality of the plan. Her primary concerns are providing lakeside trail access to people who aren't walking dogs, keeping dogs on leash on the lakeside trails as well as the paved multi-use trail, and enforcing the leash laws.

Kayla Epstein. Ms. Epstein is on the Animal Control Advisory Board and a member of Anchorage Unleashed. She thinks University Lake Park is well-loved by the community and described it as "the happiest place in Anchorage." She also believes it is the cleanest dog park in Anchorage and that dog walkers clean up after not only their own dogs, but others as well. She supports the Plan.

Pixie Sieke. Ms. Sieke says the University Lake Park is a great resource. She supports the Plan. She likes the layout of the circular off-leash dog trail, believes better signage is needed to keep dogs off the APU grassy field, and that only low fencing is needed to deter beavers from eating the trees and only where the beavers stand up to the chew on the trees.

Steve Zemke, Secretary of the University Lake Area Community Council, and a member of the University Lake Master Plan Advisory Group. Mr. Zemke reiterated the

user conflicts that exist between the off-leash dog owners and other users of the Park, and suggested that some type of schedule for off-leash days or hours might work. He supports the plan but stressed the need for monitoring of park and enforcement of violations of the park rules.

Resolution

After discussion, upon motion duly made by Commissioner James Balamaci and seconded by Commissioner Peter Murphy, PRC Resolution No. 2016-20 University Lake Park Master Plan was unanimously approved as follows:

**PRC RESOLUTION NO. 2016-20
UNIVERSITY LAKE PARK MASTER PLAN**

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 development of a University Lake Park Master Plan is identified as a priority for implementation in the 2015 UMED District Plan Update; and

WHEREAS, the University Lake Park Master Plan is intended to address issues and concerns and provides a 10 year vision to guide the management, maintenance and development of University Lake Park; and

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department facilitated an extensive public involvement process including outreach to over ten community councils, presentations at the University Area Community Council, two public workshops and three meetings with an advisory group; and

WHEREAS, the advisory group was formed to assist the Department in identifying and prioritizing management, maintenance and development priorities for University Lake Park and was comprised of a diverse group of stakeholders including representatives from major UMED institutions; federal, state and local natural resource and wildlife managers; representatives from user groups, members of the University Area Community Council, and area residents; and

WHEREAS, the recommendations proposed in the University Lake Park Master Plan attempt to balance the diverse wants and needs of all park users and are based on community and stakeholder preferences for desired future conditions, are informed by best practices, have been vetted by the advisory group, and have received a resolution from the University Area Community Council; and

WHEREAS, the recommendations proposed in the University Lake Park Master Plan provide strategies to retain the natural character of the park; improve water quality, wildlife and natural resource management; provide trails to support a variety of uses including an off-leash trail, improving signage and wayfinding, providing parking that meets demand, and upgrading maintenance and amenities to support park use; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission approves the Master Plan submitted by the Department and the advisory group for University Lake Park.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission this 8th day of September, 2016.

Voting Record on Resolution 2016-20 University Lake Master Plan:

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|-----------|---|
| In favor | Commissioner Balamaci Commissioner Jon Dyson Commissioner Michael McCambridge Commissioner Peter Murphy Commissioner Harlow Robinson Commissioner Jim Winchester |
| Opposed | None |
| Abstained | None |
| Absent | Commissioner Richard Mystem Commissioner Levi Robinson Commissioner Alison Smith |

VIII. Information Item

PRC 16-26 Vote by Mail – Ballot Drop Boxes at Recreation Centers
Presented by Dennis Wheeler, Resource Data

Dennis Wheeler discussed the Anchorage Assembly's plan to implement voting by mail. The plan is to place ballot drop boxes around the city in convenient, accessible locations that can be used by voters. It is hoped the convenience will encourage more voter turnout. The boxes are about the size of a traditional U.S. Postal Service mail box. One box was placed on a trial basis at Fairview Recreation Center last year and

the experiment was considered a success. There are three sites selected that require the support of the Parks and Recreation Commission: Fairview Recreation Center, Spenard Recreation Center, and the Sullivan Arena. Initially a single box will be temporarily replaced at each location during the election cycle, with an eye toward permanent placement if the chosen locations and the plan in general are successful.

Parks and Recreation staff will present this item for resolution at October's Parks and Recreation Commission meeting, and provide a recommendation and proposed resolution for the Commission's consideration and approval.

IX. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Peter Murphy asked if the recycling station placed at Westchester Lagoon was working out. Mr. Durand replied that it seemed to be working well. The Department had had no negative feedback.

Commissioner James Balamaci reported that his term expires in October but he will be unavailable to attend that meeting; therefore, this meeting will be his last. He said he appreciated the opportunity to work with the Parks and Recreation Commission and regrets that he will be unable to continue.

X. Upcoming Meeting

The next regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission is scheduled for 6:00 p.m., October 13, 2016, at Spenard Recreation Center.

XI. Adjournment

Upon motion duly made by Commissioner Peter Murphy and seconded by Commissioner Harlow Robinson, the motion to adjourn was unanimously approved.

MINUTES APPROVED this 13 day of October, 2016:



Jon Dyson, Chair
Parks & Recreation Commission



John Rodda, Director
Parks & Recreation