



Municipality of Anchorage, Alaska  
**Parks & Recreation Department**

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P.O. Box 196650  
Anchorage, AK 99519  
**Tel** 907-343-4355  
**URL** [www.muni.org/departments/parks](http://www.muni.org/departments/parks)



## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** January 8, 2015

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**To:** Parks & Recreation Commission

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**Cc:** Holly Spoth-Torres, Parks Superintendent

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**From:** Maeve Nevins

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**Project:** **PRC 2015-02: Proposed Alaska Highway Project Memorial — Centennial Park**

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### INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The Alaska Highway Project Committee proposes to sponsor and develop a memorial to commemorate the African-American engineers involved in the construction of the Alaska portion of the Alaska Highway. The proposed location of the memorial is Centennial Park, in the northeast Anchorage area.

Attached is additional information from the group describing the purpose and concept of the memorial, and indicating support from community council, Anchorage School District staff, and others.

Based on the information provided, the Parks and Recreation Department staff believes that the memorial would be an amenity to the Anchorage park system by increasing awareness of significant local, state, or national history.

### RECOMMENDATION

The staff supports the proposed memorial in concept. Prior to approval of the project, the Department recommends that the Alaska Highway Project Committee provide sufficient additional information to enable the Department, Community Council, Parks and Recreation Commission, and other interested citizens and groups to review and evaluate the project and potential effect on the site. The additional information and steps shall include the following, at a minimum:

- The Alaska Highway Project Committee shall provide a site plan showing the project to scale in relationship to existing Centennial Park facilities and public access, and elevations showing how the project will appear to park visitors.
- The Project Committee shall present the additional project information to the community council(s) and obtain a resolution of support and any additional comments based on the plan.
- The Project Committee shall work with Parks staff to assure that the project scale and design are appropriate for the site, existing and potential future park, pedestrian circulation and parking,
- The Project Committee shall enter into a cooperative use agreement outlining the responsibilities of the sponsors and Municipality, including long-term maintenance.

## **NARRATIVE**

### **ALASKA HIGHWAY PROJECT**

**2014**

**OUR ORGANIZATION WOULD LIKE TO INSTALL A MEMORIAL MONUMENT TO THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN ARMY ENGINEERS THAT BUILT THE ALASKA PORTION OF THE ALASKA HIGHWAY. THE WEBSITE FOR THIS ORGANIZATION IS [WWW.ALASKAHIGHWAYPROJECT.COM](http://WWW.ALASKAHIGHWAYPROJECT.COM)**

**THE PURPOSE OF THE MEMORIAL IS TO PROVIDE A TOUCHSTONE TO CONNECT THE COMMUNITY TO A NEARLY FORGOTTEN HISTORICAL EVENT WHICH BECAME A MILESTONE IN THE HISTORY OF BLACKS IN AMERICA. DURING WWII, THROUGH THE EFFORTS OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN REGIMENTS TO COMPLETE THE BUILDING OF THE ALASKA HIGHWAY, THE DESEGREGATION OF THE ARMED SERVICES BECAME A FUTURE REALITY.**

**WE RECEIVED A UNANIMOUS RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT FROM THE NORTHEAST COMMUNITY COUNCIL TO PLACE THE MONUMENT IN CENTENNIAL PARK.**

**THE SITE INCLUDES ILLUMINATED FLAG POLES DISPLAYING THE U.S FLAG, THE ALASKA STATE FLAG AND THE CANADIAN FLAG. THE SITE INCLUDES BENCH AREAS OVER CUT CONCRETE WALKWAY AREAS WITH RAISED CONCRETE WALLS THAT WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISPLAY ETCHED GRANITE HISTORICAL PHOTOS AND DONOR PLAQUES. THESE ETCHED GRANITE PHOTO WALLS WILL DEPICT ACTUAL PHOTOS FROM THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE ALASKA HIGHWAY. THERE IS A DESCRIPTIVE PLAQUE FOR EACH PHOTO.**

**THE SCULPTURE MONUMENT IS TITLED “THE VIEW FROM THE MOUNTAIN TOP”. THREE AFRICAN AMERICAN ARMY ENGINEERS STAND ON A ROCKY SUMMIT LOOKING NORTH. SCULPTED IN BRONZE, THE THREE MEN REPRESENT THE THREE AFRICAN AMERICAN ENGINEER REGIMENTS WHO BUILT THE ALASKA PORTION OF THE ALASKA HIGHWAY. THE CONCRETE FOUNDATION FOR THE MOUNTAIN TOP IS DESIGNED AFTER THE GARRISON CAP WORN BY THE SOLDIERS. THE ENGINEER ON THE WEST LEANS AGAINST A SAPLING POLE HE HAS FASHIONED FOR SURVEYING. WHILE LEANING ON A SHOVEL, THE MIDDLE SOLDIER POINTS TO THE LAND THEY ARE ALL MOVING TOWARD. THE SOLDIER TO THE EAST IS AT EASE WHILE**

**HOLDING A LOG BOOK. ON THE FACE OF THE CONCRETE IS A LASER ETCHED IMAGE IN BLACK GRANITE OF THE ICONIC PHOTO OF THE MEETING AT CONTACT CREEK OF CORPORAL REFINES SIMS JR. AND PRIVATE ALFRED JULUFKA.**

**ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE SCULPTURE, THE MEN FACE THE VIEWER AND ARE ILLUMINATED FROM BELOW TO BE SEEN BY PASSING MOTORISTS. ON THE CONCRETE BASE IS THE POEM “TWO ROADS TO CIVIL RIGHTS” BY E. JEAN POLLARD. IT IS A PLAQUE CAST IN BRONZE.**

**JIM DAULT, SHALA DOBSON, JEAN POLLARD  
BISHOP THOMAS**

### **NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

### **ALASKA HIGHWAY PROJECT**

**2014**

**The Anchorage community would benefit from this Alaska Highway Memorial because it is a physical reminder of an important historical event that occurred in Alaska. The building of the Alaska Highway was an essential strategic part of World War II. As a direct result of the hard work and sacrifices of the Army Corps of Engineers to complete the highway, the victory in World War II**

**was assured. At present, there is no memorial in Anchorage to the African American Engineers who helped build the Alaska Highway.**

**Additionally, an education component will be added to the Anchorage School District Alaska Studies Curriculum which will incorporate the history of the building of the Alaska Highway by the 93<sup>rd</sup>, 95<sup>th</sup>, and 97<sup>th</sup> Engineering Regiments. Each student graduating from high school will be required to take Alaska Studies and become knowledgeable in this important historic event. Fieldtrips to see an actual memorial, help to solidify the historical component of the studies for the children.**

**Centennial Park already commemorates an historical event and its location is a perfect fit for this Alaska Highway Memorial. It is our belief that the location of this memorial at the entrance to Centennial Park and campground location, its proximity to the Army Base, and easy access and visibility to the highway will make it a “must see” destination for citizens of Anchorage and visitors to Alaska.**

**Jim Dault, Shala Dobson, Jean Pollard, Bishop Thomas**

## **TIMELINE FOR PROJECT COMPLETION**

### **ALASKA HIGHWAY PROJECT**

**2014**

- SITE FOR ALASKA HIGHWAY MEMORIAL SELECTED AND APPROVED BY THE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION. **EARLY WINTER 2015**
- SCOPE OF MEMORIAL PROJECT DEFINED. SCALE AND SIZE OF MEMORIAL TO BE DETERMINED BY WORKING GROUP OF PARKS AND RECREATION AND ALASKA HIGHWAY COMMITTEE. **LATE WINTER 2015**
- SITE PLANS AND ENGINEERED DRAWINGS FOR PROJECT  
**SPRING 2015**
- COST ESTIMATE TO BE COMPLETED BY AN ENGINEERING FIRM THAT WILL COOPERATE WITH PARKS AND RECREATION . **SPRING 2015**
- PRELIMINARY SITE WORK INCLUDING SURVEY AND AS BUILT COMPLETED. **SPRING 2015**
- CONSTRUCTION OF MEMORIAL TO COMMENCE.  
**SUMMER 2015**
- COMPLETION OF ALASKA HIGHWAY MEMORIAL  
**2016**

## **FUNDING STRATEGY**

### **ALASKA HIGHWAY PROJECT 2014**

- It is estimated the project budget will approximate \$250,000.
- The project funds will include in-kind contributions, actual cash contributions from businesses and individuals, and the initial legislative grant of \$50,000.
- The in-kind contributions include possible engineering services, site preparation services by contractors, material products by individuals and businesses. Also included will be accounting and fundraising services.
- Several Veterans' groups including the retired Corps of Engineers Organization have expressed a desire to help with historical information and cash contributions.
- Possible charitable organizations such as the Rasmusson Foundation and the Alaska Humanities Forum could assist with gifts or grants.
- Volunteer in-kind hours by the Alaska Highway Project Committee  
Shala Dobson, Jim Dault, Jean Pollard, Bishop Thomas

## **MANAGEMENT/MAINTENANCE PLAN**

### **ALASKA HIGHWAY PROJECT**

**2014**

- MAINTENANCE TASKS WILL INCLUDE THE REGULAR SWEEPING, RAKING, SNOW REMOVAL AT THE MEMORIAL AREA. THIS WORK WILL BE PERFORMED BY PARKS AND RECREATION PERSONNEL.
- WATERING SOURCE IS ON SITE NEAR THE CABIN AT CENTENNIAL PARK.
- MAINTENANCE FOR THE ACTUAL SCULPTURE HAS BEEN AGREED TO BY THE ANCHORAGE CURATOR OF PUBLIC ART. THIS WILL INCLUDE THE ACTUAL BRONZE WORK AND THE PEDESTAL, ALSO ANY LIGHTING OF THE SCULPTURE. THE ORIGINAL MOLDS FOR THE SCULPTURE WILL BE RETAINED BY THE ARTISTS IN THE EVENT OF DAMAGE OR REPLACEMENT OF THE ORIGINAL WORKS.

**SHALA DOBSON, JIM DAULT, JEAN POLLARD, BISHOP THOMAS**



## **SUPPORT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

### **ALASKA HIGHWAY PROJECT**

**2014**

- **THE NORTHEAST COMMUNITY COUNCIL HAS GIVEN US A RESOLUTION OF UNANIMOUS SUPPORT FOR THE PLACEMENT OF THE ALASKA HIGHWAY MEMORIAL AT CENTENNIAL PARK.**
- **THE SCENIC FOOTHILLS COMMUNITY COUNCIL HAS GIVEN THEIR UNANIMOUS SUPPORT TO THE NORTHEAST COMMUNITY COUNCIL FOR THE PLACEMENT OF THE ALASKA HIGHWAY MEMORIAL AT CENTENNIAL PARK.**
- **PAM ORME – SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM COORDINATOR WITH THE ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT**
- **LAEL MORGAN, FEATURED IN THE HISTORY CHANNEL VIDEO ABOUT THE ALASKA HIGHWAY, JOURNALIST**
- **REPRESENTATIVE GABRIELLE LEDOUX**
- **SENATOR BILL WEILECHOWSKI**
- **MANY LETTERS OF SUPPORT**

Jean, I am out of the state right now but wanted to support your project.

I am honored to write a letter of support for Jean Pollard to receive a Challenge Grant. I attended the ribbon cutting program for the memorial benches honoring the African American soldiers who worked to build the Alaska Highway.

Jean has worked tirelessly to raise awareness of this historic event. She has the talent and ability to bring this event to the students through out the state of Alaska. As the Anchorage School District Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator I value her hard work on

this project. This project can help students in the Anchorage School District in both the third grade and high school Alaska Studies classes gain a better understanding of this event. It is wonderful when the community can support our educational goals. The wonderful website is just the beginning of what we can expect from Jean.  
I highly value her work and appreciate any and all support for this project.

Sincerely,  
Pamela J. Orme  
Sent from my iPad

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**NECC** = Northeast Community Council  
**SFCC** = Scenic Park Community Council

----- Forwarded message -----  
From: Hana <[htcrawford@acsalaska.net](mailto:htcrawford@acsalaska.net)>  
Date: Fri, Nov 7, 2014 at 7:58 PM  
Subject: Re: -- Resolution - Monument from Lorne Bretz  
To: "[Jean.Pollard@gmail.com](mailto:Jean.Pollard@gmail.com)" <[jean.pollard@gmail.com](mailto:jean.pollard@gmail.com)>

By act of Scenic Foothills Com. Council on Nov. 6, 2014  
By **unanimous vote** Scenic Foothills supports the  
Northeast Community Council resolution that supports  
the Alaska Highway commemorative monument on the  
land designated in Centennial Park.

Signed Harry T. Crawford Jr.  
Treasurer and chair of this meeting

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from: [Jean.Pollard@gmail.com](mailto:Jean.Pollard@gmail.com) <[jean.pollard@gmail.com](mailto:jean.pollard@gmail.com)>  
to: [htcrawford@acsalaska.net](mailto:htcrawford@acsalaska.net)  
date: Fri, Nov 7, 2014 at 9:42 AM  
subject: -- Resolution - Monument from Lorne Bretz

> Harry Crawford, ([907-227-2139](tel:907-227-2139))  
>  
> Here is what the "**Resolution**" that we have received from the  
> Northeast Community Council.

> **\*REGARDING ALASKA HIGHWAY MONUMENT\***

>  
> BE IT RESOLVED  
> The Northeast Community Council supports the Alaska  
> Highway commemorative monument on the land designated  
> in the **\*Centennial Park\***.

>  
> PASSED AND APPROVED by the Northeast Community

Council this 15 day of May

2014.

>

> **Yeas 20 Nays 0 Abstain 1**

>

> It was signed by the President: Lorne Bretz

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>

> Click below for the actually "Resolution" that the Northeast

> Community Council gave to us on May 15, 2014.

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> ----- Forwarded message -----

> From: Lorne Bretz <[bretz4necc@gmail.com](mailto:bretz4necc@gmail.com)>

> Date: Mon, May 26, 2014 at 8:55 PM

> Subject: Resolution - Monument

> To: [jean.pollard@gmail.com](mailto:jean.pollard@gmail.com)

> Cc: Stuart Grenier <[stugrenier@gmail.com](mailto:stugrenier@gmail.com)>

>

>

> Hi Jean,

> Thank-you for bringing this project before the council for community  
> input. Attached is the resolution that was voted on May 15.

>

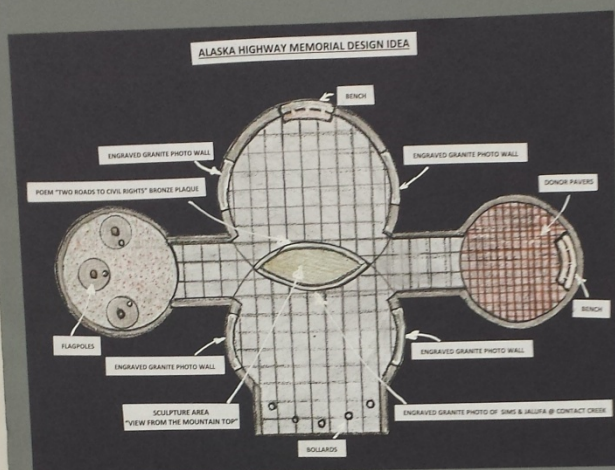
> Sincerely,

>

> Lorne Bretz

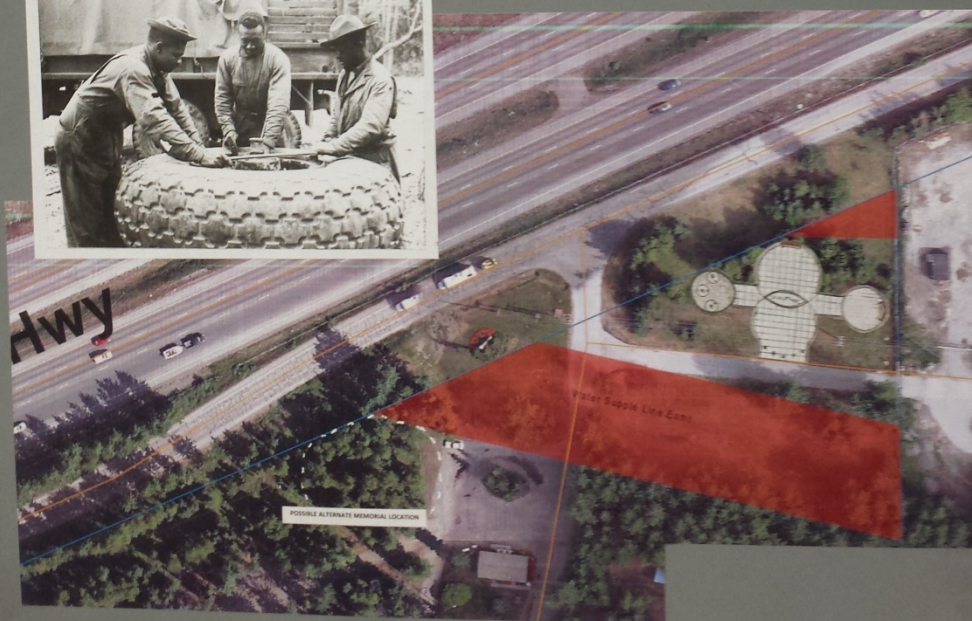
> President

> Northeast Community Council



# ALASKA HIGHWAY PROJECT

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: INSTALL MEMORIAL IN AN ANCHORAGE PARK HONORING AFRICAN-AMERICAN ENGINEER SOLDIERS OF WWII WHO BUILT THE ALASKA PORTION OF THE ALASKA HIGHWAY.



## **The "Significance" of the project!**

### **A BRIEF HISTORY**

It just so happens that there were 11,000 Army soldiers who worked on the Alaska Highway from 1942-1943. The 7,000 of the all White Army American Engineers were located in Canada with there bulldozers heading towards Alaska. The 4,000 all Black African American Army Engineers were located in Alaska with there bulldozers heading towards Canada.

The reason why we are only honoring the African American Army Engineers, is because they were the only ones who actually built the Alaska portion of the highway. It during segregation and the blacks and the whites were not allowed to work together side by side.

Because of what these soldiers did in 1942, on July 26, 1948, President Truman declared that all military units would be integrated. This was the first government agency to establish integration. The Alaska Highway has been called, "The Road to Civil Rights. This means that before Martin Luther King marched on the road for civil rights, these soldiers built the road towards civil rights. And to think that it happened in the great state of Alaska.

My team and I are also working with Canada as we gear towards the 75th anniversary of the building of the Alaska Highway. Bishop Dave Thomas is a military veteran. He is the veteran contact for the Alaska Highway. For 3 years straight, he went to Canada during some of their celebrations.

Canada said that they will be celebrating the building of the Alaska Highway, every month during the year 2017. In Alaska, we plan to celebrate it during the month of September.

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## **The "Benefit" of the project!**

The reasons that we also feel the Centennial Park would be a wonderful location to honor the African American Army Engineers are:

1. Many people who drive up the Alaska Highway stay at the Centennial Park. They have no idea concerning the significance of the highway that drove on to get there.
2. It will be at the entrance of the Centennial Park and facing the Glenn HWY so that it can be seen from the street.
3. The soldiers were in the army. It was the "Core of Engineers" unit. Ft. Richardson is home to the "Core of Engineers" unit. Therefore, The Centennial Park is right across from the "Core of Engineers" unit on the Ft. Richardson army base.
4. The Centennial Park is surrounded by trees. It has a ski slope, and some of the trails are unpaved. This sets a wonderful atmosphere for imagining some of the rough ground that those soldiers had to overcome in order to open up a highway.
5. The Anchorage School District is very interested in this project. "The Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator" is interested in putting this project into the "Alaska Studies" unit of the "Social Studies" section.
6. Once we finish compelling all of the research on the Alaska Highway, we will have to hire six teachers from the Anchorage School District. The teachers have to know how to write a curriculum for this topic.

Once the teachers complete that portion of the project, we have to get it published. After it is published, the Anchorage School District will then put this information into the Alaska Studies curriculum.

No student can graduate from high school

without taking Alaska Studies. This will insure that all of the students will now be exposed to "The Alaska Highway" portion as part of our Alaska history. This is wonderful news for this project.

Since the ASD is interested in doing this, they must also see the significance and the benefit of this project for the students.

During the months of September or May, we'd like to offer some schools the opportunity to go to the Centennial Park for a field trip. This way they would get an idea of the hardships that those soldiers endured as they built this historic highway.

7. The name is very fitting to install it here as though we are already preparing for the 2042 Centennial of the building of the Alaska Highway. In 2015, it will be the Anchorage Centennial. 2017 will represent the 75th anniversary of the building the Alaska Highway.

In 1992, it was the 50th anniversary of the building the Alaska Highway. During the summer of that year, Lael Morgan located about 50 of those soldiers and brought them to Anchorage. They were also a part of the 4th of July parade (in Anchorage) during that time.

8. Shala Dobson and her husband (Jim Dault) are the ones who will be building the monument and the supporters wall. They are also the ones who built the Veterans wall downtown on the park stripe.
9. In addition to putting a monument at the Centennial Park, we would like to also have a **supporters wall** there eventually. The purpose of the monument is to honor the soldiers who built the Alaska portion of the highway.

The purpose of the supporters wall is to thank our

supporters and contributors who made it possible to put up these markers at the entrance of the Centennial Park.

10. Finally, by building the monument at the Centennial Park, it would be wonderful for the Muldoon Community and Ft. Richardson, to have a meaningful monument established in there area.