



**MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE**  
**PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION**



**MINUTES OF THE  
REGULAR MEETING**

**March 9, 2023**

The March 9, 2023, meeting was held in person at Spenard Community Recreation Center.

**CALL TO ORDER**

The March 9, 2023, regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission was called to order by Grace Johnston via Brian Looney at **6:05** p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

Commissioners present:

- Commissioner Edwin Blair
- Commissioner Bruce Graham (Online)
- Commissioner Grace Johnston (Online)
- Commissioner Brian Looney

A quorum was not achieved with four members present.

Staff present:

- Steve Rafuse
- Mike Braniff
- Nicolette Dent
- Ellen Devine

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Upon motion duly made by **Commissioner Johnston** and seconded by **Commissioner Blair**, the Agenda for the March 9, 2023, meeting was unanimously approved.

## APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Upon motion duly made by **Commissioner Blair** and seconded by **Commissioner Johnston**, the Minutes of the February 9, 2023, meeting was unanimously approved.

## DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

Mike Braniff, Anchorage Parks and Recreation director

1. **Leaving Early:** Mike indicated he was leaving a little early from the meeting to attend the Fairview Community Council meeting.
2. **Events:** There has been a ton of events that Parks and Recreation has helped with. This includes doing behind the scenes maintenance needs for Fur Rondy, taking care of trails for the Tour of Anchorage, and keeping the lake ice in good condition for Westchester Family Skate.
3. **Ice and Trails:** Ice is still being maintained on rinks and lakes and the goal is to have skating opportunities through spring break. Rinks are starting to pull away and blister, but lakes are in great condition. The trails are currently in great shape.
4. **Seasonal Hiring:** Hiring for summer seasonals is officially in full swing. We are hiring positions in park maintenance, healthy spaces, tree crew, aquatics, and indoor and outdoor recreation.
5. **Summer construction:** We are ramping up for summer construction and have the following projects on the schedule for this summer:
  - Elderberry Playground project
  - Taku Lake Skate Park
  - New bridges at Chanshtnu
  - New bridges along the Tour Trail
  - Ure Park bridges
  - Russian Jack Springs Park bridge
6. **April PRC:** Will have a ton of action items coming up at the next Parks and Recreation Commission meeting.
7. **Fairview Rec:** The community recreation centers are there to serve our communities for recreational opportunities but also to serve as emergency shelters. Last night the Fairview Recreation Center was used as an emergency shelter for residents of an apartment building that experienced a fire.

## NOMINATION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Nomination of Chair and Vice Chair was moved to the April PRC meeting due to not having a quorum at the March meeting.

## APPEARANCE REQUESTS

There were no appearance requests.

## **ANCHORAGE PARK FOUNDATION**

There was no staff present from the Anchorage Park Foundation. Diana and Beth are presently in Washington DC to work on procuring funding.

**New Service Area:** Commissioner Blair posed a question concerning the proposed new Chugach State Park service area that will be on the ballot this year, asking whether we should support paying for something that the State of Alaska should be paying? Mr. Rafuse and Mr. Braniff clarified that while this is a complicated topic and that while the proposal is to create a new service area it won't necessarily affect how Parks and Recreation conducts business.

## **ACTION ITEM**

There were no action items.

## **INFORMATION ITEMS**

### **PRC 23-05: Eastchester Park Master Plan**

Presented by Nicolette Dent, Park Planner

Nicolette Dent, Park Planner, presented an information item concerning the planning and public involvement process for the Eastchester Park Master Plan. The goal of this new master plan will be to identify park improvement opportunities for the next 20 years. The area being defined as Eastchester Parks encompasses 80 acres between the Seward Highway and Lake Otis Parkway and includes a portion of the Chester Creek Trail. This is a historically black community and has some of the first black-owned business in Anchorage. The area is surrounded by three separate community councils including Airport Heights, Rogers Park, and Fairview. During an urban renewal the city acquired the Woodside Park section, and the first park went in in 1980.

The public engagement plan for this park is to use a Community Advisory Group of 10-15 residents, neighbors, and stakeholders to come together during the planning process to help ensure that we have nuanced and thorough conversation. We also plan to do pop-up outreach on the trail during the summer to encounter park users and converse with families. The plan will be developed alongside the public outreach/involvement process. Once the plan is developed and it has been vetted by the advisory group, we will post a public review draft and seek support from the surrounding Community Councils. Once support is earned, we will then present the final plan to the Parks and Recreation Commission as well as the Planning and Zoning Commission. The goal is to finalize and get the plan approved in 2024.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

No committee has been formed at this time, and a new committee could not be formed due to not having a quorum.

### COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

- **Budget Presentation** – Commissioner Graham formally requested a presentation on the Parks and Recreation Budget. Commissioner Looney highlighted that the budget is available online, but several commissioners agreed that a conversation about the cost centers would be helpful.
- **Budget Committee** – It was agreed upon that a formal Budget Review committee is not necessary, and what commissioner Graham was seeking was a clarification in the form of a budget presentation.

### UPCOMING MEETING

The next meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission is scheduled for 6:00 p.m., on Thursday, April 13, 2023, at the Spenard Community Recreation Center.

### ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion made by **Commissioner Graham**, seconded by **Commissioner Blair** and unanimously approved, the meeting adjourned at **6:59 p.m.**

MINUTES APPROVED this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2023:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Grace Johnston, Chair  
Parks & Recreation Commission

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mike Braniff, Director  
Parks & Recreation