



MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION



**MINUTES OF THE
REGULAR MEETING**

May 11, 2023

The May 11, 2023, meeting was held in person at Spenard Community Recreation Center.

CALL TO ORDER

The May 11, 2023, regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission was called to order by Chair Brian Looney at **6:07 p.m.**

ROLL CALL

Commissioners present:

- Commissioner Edwin Blair
- Commissioner Grace Johnston (Online)
- Commissioner Andrew Kastning
- Commissioner Brian Looney
- Commissioner Mary Vollendorf
- Commissioner Scott Wamsganz

A quorum was achieved with six members present.

Staff present:

- Steve Rafuse
- Mike Braniff
- Brad Muir
- Ellen Devine

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Upon motion duly made by **Commissioner Looney** and seconded by **Commissioner Vollendorf**, the Agenda for the May 11, 2023, meeting was unanimously approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Upon motion duly made by **Commissioner Kastning** and seconded by **Commissioner Blair**, the Minutes of the April 13, 2023, meeting was unanimously approved.

DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

Mike Braniff--Parks and Recreation Director

1. **Summer Operations:** It is officially late spring, and we are moving into summer operations! The greenhouse looks great and flowers are getting ready to go out. Most capital projects are on hold, until axel restrictions are lifted.
2. **Hiring:** Summer hiring continues to be a priority. Most of our work groups are staffed at 55%. Most folks searching for summer employment have already found it for the year.
3. **Homeless Camps** – This is the first year that we are not abating camps. We are seeing camps in four major locations Cuddy Park, Davis Park, and Chester Creek Trail Corridor near Sullivan Arena. We are not compelling people to leave.

DISCUSSION

- **Whose responsibility is it to remove homeless camps?** – Abatement is a police function. We do not have the power to abate the camps and historically the police remove the camps, and Parks and Recreation does the work to clean the camps. In more recent years, the pace has been set by us in order of the number of camps we felt we could manage/clean at a time.
- **Is homeless camp abatement/cleaning a staffing issue?** - No, this is more a shelter issue. At this time, our work group that cleans the camps is 75% filled. Our guidance is that it is not illegal to be homeless. If you cannot provide low-barrier housing, then you cannot force people out of their camps. This is what limits us to cleaning instead of abating.
- **Could a designated camp area like Centennial be established for the upcoming summer?** - No, not currently. We had a flood of money during the pandemic, but can no longer afford that level of spending.
- **Was Centennial a resource intensive choice?** – No, but that is more a policy decision.

NON-AGENDA APPEARANCE REQUESTS

There were no non-agenda appearance requests.

ANCHORAGE PARK FOUNDATION

Beth Nordland – Executive Director from Anchorage Park Foundation

- **Park Bond** - The park bond passed.
- **Summer Celebrations and Volunteer Events** - We are coming into celebrations and volunteer events this summer! Commissioners can expect to hear from APF quite a bit this summer. Some of the big projects include the inclusive playground at Elderberry, the indigenous placename sign at Point Woronzof, the new fence along Frontierland with an indigenous pattern, and new bridges in Ure Park and Chanshtnu Park.
- **Systemwide Wayfinding** - We are excited about the trail wide wayfinding and sign plan that will be brought to the PRC next month and cover the whole moose loop. We also got funding to do a survey to see about transportation and connecting between Anchorage and Palmer.
- **Urban Forestry Grant** - Anchorage Park Foundation is applying for an urban forestry grant through the US Forest Service and includes a lot of tree planting and can help with streambank and habitat restoration, and we are requesting \$4 million.

ACTION ITEM

There were no Action items.

INFORMATION ITEMS

PRC 23-12: Youth Employment in Parks Program 2023

Presented by Brad Muir

Brad Muir, the Natural Resource Manager for Anchorage Parks and Recreation, presented on the upcoming summer projects for the Youth Employment in Parks Program.

As some background/overview of the program, we hire teenagers between the ages of 16-19 to complete projects in parks and along trails. This is the 17th summer of YEP, and to date we have completed 119 projects and worked with over 450 Anchorage teens. We typically start directly after Memorial Day, then we have a training week that covers tool use and safety and then we do 8 weeks of park projects, and finish the season with a mentorship week.

In terms of projects, we will be working at:

- **University Lake Park** - Revegetate an 800ft trail and protect a bird nesting area and return this area back to a natural setting and create a new out-and-back trail so folks can enjoy the area while not disrupting the area.

- **Russian Jack Springs Singletrack** – Working with Alaska Trails to create beginner and intermediate singletrack trails.
- **Spruce Planting** – Due to the number of trees that have been killed and removed due to Spruce Bark Beetle infestation, we work to replant white spruce along our greenbelts to replace those trees.
- **Bird Cherry** – Working with the Bureau of Land Management to do an inventory and remove invasive bird cherry in Far North Bicentennial Park.
- **Campbell Creek Streambank Restoration** – Working to restore and revegetate along the creek and relocate a portion of the trail to avoid further erosion.
- **Far North Bicentennial Park Trail Maintenance** – This is part of a continued Challenge Grant to improve muddy spot and raise tread in low-lying areas.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

There were no commissioner comments.

UPCOMING MEETING

The next meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission is scheduled for 6:00 p.m., on Thursday, June 8, 2023, at the Spenard Community Recreation Center.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion made by **Commissioner Vollendorf**, seconded by **Commissioner Blair** and unanimously approved, the meeting adjourned at **7:04 p.m.**

MINUTES APPROVED this ____ day of _____, 2023:

Brian Looney, Chair
Parks & Recreation Commission

Mike Braniff, Director
Parks & Recreation