



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

**MINUTES OF THE  
REGULAR MEETING**



**FEBRUARY 11, 2021**

**I. Call to Order**

The February 11, 2021 regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission was called to order by Chair Kelly Chang at 6:02 p.m. The meeting was a virtual meeting held using Microsoft Teams.

**II. Roll Call**

Commissioners present:

Commissioner Kelly Chang  
Commissioner Jon Dyson  
Commissioner Grace Johnston  
Commissioner Andrew Kastning  
Commissioner Alison Smith

Commissioners absent:

Commissioner Eric Milliken

A quorum was achieved with five members present.

Staff present:

Josh Durand  
Steve Rafuse  
Taylor Keegan  
Diana Cramer

**III. Approval of Agenda**

Upon motion duly made by Commissioner Dyson and seconded by Commissioner Smith, the Agenda for the February 11, 2021 meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission was unanimously approved.

#### **IV. Approval of Minutes**

It was noted that the attendance record in the proposed minutes for October 8, 2020 was incorrect and needed to be corrected to reflect that Commissioner Johnston was in attendance, not absent. Upon motion duly made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Dyson, the Minutes of the October 8, 2020 meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission as amended were unanimously approved.

#### **V. Director's Comments**

Josh Durand, Director of Parks and Recreation provided his update on Parks and Recreation activities:

Cares Act funding, Round 1. Spruce bark beetle remediation was conducted, focusing on beetle kill that was close to active places such as trails, playgrounds, and ballfields, and also a handful of locations that were identified by AFD as potential fire hazards, such as those close to residential areas. Tree contractors were hired to focus on major greenbelts and some of our larger parks. Six trail projects were funded. Because of the impact on indoor winter recreation and a need for more outdoor recreation opportunities, a contractor was hired to maintain ice rinks eight Anchorage School District grounds. Round 2 funding will go to the Anchorage Park Foundation for indigenous place making at Westchester Lagoon, a bike park/single track project near Mirror Lake in Eagle River, and trail improvements in Girdwood. The rest has not been allocated yet but will likely be used for improvements at the Eagle River Nature Center.

Anchorage trails and ice rinks are in great shape and are being heavily used by the community.

Lighting at the greenhouse, both for the public greenhouse and in the growing operations, has been completed. The public greenhouse is open for the public to enjoy a year-round tropical green space.

Former Park Commissioner Erin Kirkland has joined the staff of Parks and Recreation as the Community Outreach Coordinator. Nicolette Dent has been hired as a professional planner.

2020 was not a big construction year, due to the pandemic, but 2021 is shaping up to be a very busy construction year.

The recruitment process has begun for Youth Employment in Parks. Positions have been advertised and youth ages 16-19 are encouraged to apply.

Homeless camp abatement efforts are transitioning to a year-round program. The process of getting seven new positions established, and then advertised and filled has begun. The year-round program is expected to have a big impact on camp abatement efforts.

The bond package for the April election is fairly typical for Parks and Recreation. The 3.95-million-dollar bond includes continued funding for Campbell Creek Trail rehabilitation and wayfinding, continuation of development at Chanshtnu Muldoon Park, safety and ADA access upgrades at Chester Creek Sports Complex, athletic field safety improvements, and facility improvement upgrades. Also included are the Fish Creek Trail project (AMATS funding), the Ship Creek-Coastal Trail connection (AMATS funding), Ure Park improvements, matching funds for a Taku Lake playground and skate park improvements, the Chugach Foothills connector trail, and a bike park at South Anchorage Sports Park.

Next month Commissioners will need to elect officers. A new commissioner, Brian Looney, should be joining us next month. There will still be two vacant seats on the commission to be filled.

Commissioner Smith complemented the Department on the good job it is doing on the ice at Westchester Lagoon.

Commissioner Smith asked Mr. Durand about changes to the municipal code regarding the use of drones on park property. Mr. Durand responded that he is unaware of any recent changes to that code. The only place where use of drones is currently allowed is at Ray E. Storck Park. If a professional entity wants to use a drone on park property, it needs to get a permit. There are lot of constraints in place because of air space around Anchorage.

Commissioner Kastning asked about ski trail maintenance and what kind of feedback has been received from the public. Commissioner Durand and Steve Rafuse shared park maintenance operations procedures, equipment, and scheduling regarding trail maintenance. Feedback from the public has been generally positive.

## **VI. Appearance Requests**

There were no appearance requests from the public for non-agenda items.

## **VII. Anchorage Park Foundation Report**

Diana Rhoads from the Anchorage Park Foundation invited everyone to attend a mayoral candidate forum to be held virtually 5:00 to 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, February 17. The forum is being sponsored by 22 non-profit organizations. The focus of the forum will be parks, trails and the economy.

Commissioner Chang asked if commissioners would be able to assist in interviewing YEP candidates this year. Ms. Rhoads advised commissioners to reach out to Brad Muir or Annie Du Bois if they are interested.

## **VIII. Action Item**

### **PRC 21-01: Phase II Chugach Foothills NE Connector PRC Resolution 2021-01**

Presented by Taylor Keegan, Park Planner

Phase II of the Chugach Foothills NE Connector will be a multi-use, non-motorized route in Far North Bicentennial Park, running parallel to Tudor Road on the south side near the Tudor-Muldoon curve. It will provide safe, non-motorized transportation and recreation opportunities for the East Anchorage community, as well as safer transportation opportunities for students at Benny Benson school, visitors to the Alaska Botanical Garden and Far North Bicentennial Park, and will connect bike and pedestrian facilities from the south side of Tudor Road to the Phase 1 Chugach Foothills Connector.

Continuing from Phase I which connected Klutina Drive to Regal Mountain Drive, Phase II will connect Regal Mountain Drive to a pathway along Campbell Airstrip Road on the south side of Tudor Road. Parks and Recreation received Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funding through AMATs for the project. Federal funding requires the project to meet both environmental and ADA standards. The project will also go through MOA Streets and Trails Review and Title 21 trail review. Numerous alternative alignments were reviewed and the preferred alternative selected balances access, environmental impacts, utility conflicts, and cost. The process, which began during the Far North trail improvement plan has involved Anchorage School District students, UAA engineering students, stakeholders, local engineers, and DOT representatives. Public involvement included Scenic Park Community Council presentations, meetings with Anchorage School District representatives, meetings with the Army Corps of Engineers, and two transportation fairs, a pre-application meeting with all involved agencies was held in December 2020, and a virtual open house with the Scenic Foothills Community Council.

After presentation at this meeting to the Parks and Recreation Commission, the process will continue with wetlands mitigation permitting, more agency coordination with Heritage Land Bank and Army Corps of Engineers. In May the project will be presented to the Urban Design Commission. The aim is to have the final project design submitted to DOT for certification in spring 2021. It is hoped to have a final public hearing at the Urban Design Commission in May 2021, with final certification by fall 2021. It is anticipated construction will begin in 2022.

Details regarding funding and costs was provided. The project is funded through a combination of MOA bonds and FHWA grants. The project is currently encumbered at \$1,014,015.66 which includes \$780,654.30 through AMATS funding and a \$202,803 matching obligation from Parks and Recreation.

Parks and Recreation recommends that the Parks and Recreation Commission pass a resolution supporting Phase II Chugach Foothills Northeast Connector Trail.

There were no public appearance requests for this Action Item.

Upon motion duly made by Commissioner Dyson and seconded by Commissioner Johnston, PRC Resolution 2021-01 Phase II Chugach Foothills NE Connector was unanimously approved. The approved resolution is attached to these minutes.

Voting record for PRC Resolution 2021-01:

Yea – Commissioners Chang, Dyson, Johnston, Kastning, and Smith

Opposed – none

Abstained – none

Absent – Commissioner Milliken

## **IX. Information Items**

There were not information items presented.

## **X. Commissioner Comments**


Commissioner Chang asked about the status of the reappointment of commissioners whose terms had expired in October. Mr. Durand responded that it is his understanding that their reappointments were confirmed.

## **XI. Adjournment**

Upon motion duly made by Commissioner Smith, seconded by Commissioner Dyson, and unanimously approved, the meeting adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

MINUTES APPROVED this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2021:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair  
Parks & Recreation Commission

 on behalf of  
Josh Durand  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Director  
Parks & Recreation