



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



**MINUTES OF THE  
REGULAR MEETING**

**July 13, 2023**

The July 13, 2023, meeting was held in person at Spenard Community Recreation Center.

**CALL TO ORDER**

The July 13, 2023, regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission was called to order by Chair Brian Looney at **6:00 p.m.**

**ROLL CALL**

Commissioners present:

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

A quorum was achieved with **six** members present.

Staff present:

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

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Upon motion duly made by **Commissioner Vollendorf** and seconded by **Commissioner Johnston**, the Agenda for the July 13, 2023, meeting was unanimously approved.

## APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Upon motion duly made by **Commissioner Vollendorf** and seconded by **Commissioner Johnston**, the Minutes of the May 11, 2023, meeting was unanimously approved.

## DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

Mike Braniff--Parks and Recreation Director

1. **Summer Operations:** Team is doing a great job despite the challenge of the current labor market that is meaning most crews are functioning at 50% staffing. We have found efficiencies and ways to still get things done.
2. **Budget:** Starting to discuss keeping up with this labor market and being able to pay more and have to solve ways to be more competitive with our pay.
3. **Construction Update** (Presented by Steve Rafuse): We are halfway through the summer! Two big projects happening right now include Elderberry Park which is getting a new playground, new landscaping, and overall making it a nice gateway to the Coastal Trail. Another big project is the kickoff on the Taku Lake Skate Park with Grindline. Most of the site work will be done this year, but concrete work won't be finished until next year. YEP is working on singletrack trails in Russian Jack. Three new bridges going in on the Tour Trail which will allow big groomers come though the trail. Assembly approved the bridge and trail replacement. Northeast connector trail has gone in and we are celebrating that next week (7/26).

## DISCUSSION

- **What do you do with unspent labor dollars?** – These are not full-time benefitted positions. A problem we run into is that we have unspent labor dollars but when we ask to have a bigger budget to pay more folks say that you aren't using the dollars you have. Some of the dollars go to overtime for employees as well as moving some from labor to non-labor.
- **Are you cutting hours at the pools?** – Aquatics is a difficult area. Primarily we employ young lifeguards, and it is tricky to get folks certified and then into positions that only pay \$16/hr.
- **What are some things that are being put on the back burner?** – There are quite a few small construction projects that are on the back burner as most of our focus is on doing the basics of mowing, planting, and picking up garbage. We have also made an adaptive version of running Centennial Campground where we have less staff out at the campground. None of these are perfect but allows us to continue serving the public and allow people to recreate.
- **Let's chat about University Lake?** – A fuel spill from an ANTHC generator came into the storm drain and then into University Lake. EPA, DEC, and Watershed Managements did most of the work. ADF&G and Fish and Wildlife did their best to keep animals away from the spill.

## **NON-AGENDA APPEARANCE REQUESTS**

There were no non-agenda appearance requests.

## **ANCHORAGE PARK FOUNDATION**

There was no representative from the Anchorage Park Foundation.

## **ACTION ITEM**

### **PRC 23-13: McPhee/FIG Gardens Expansion**

#### **PRC Resolution 2023-09**

Presented by Nicolette Dent

Nicolette Dent, Anchorage Parks and Recreation park planner, presented on the McPhee/FIG Gardens Expansion. McPhee Gardens is part of Davis Park and is leased from JBER. It is a great green buffer between the neighborhood and JBER. Fresh International Gardens is a refugee assistance program and is located at McPhee since 2007. Catholic Social Services got a USDA grant to expand the garden. What is proposed is a 200' x 40' expanded garden with fence, irrigation, and gardens.

The Davis Park Master Plan did highlight an increased demand for garden space, and it improves access to fresh produce. The work would begin in August of 2023 and continue through summer 2024. This would be managed by Catholic Social Services and is funded by a USDA grant.

There has been a large influx of refugees into this area. The community council was approached twice. The biggest concern has been concerning tree removal, and our goal is to preserve as many trees as possible.

Upon motion made by **Commissioner Vollendorf**, seconded by **Commissioner Johnston** and unanimously approved, the resolution was passed.

## **INFORMATION ITEMS**

### **PRC 23-14: Systemwide Wayfinding Plan**

Presented by Nicolette Dent

Nicolette Dent, Anchorage Parks and Recreation Park planner, presented on the systemwide wayfinding plan which is a universal series of signs, maps, and symbols to guide folks around town. This is a partnership between the Anchorage Park Foundation and Anchorage Parks and Recreation, and last year APF received an \$800K legislative grant focused on wayfinding. Wayfinding can really promote a sense of security for trail users.

Anchorage has a design intent which was developed in 2015 and is our wayfinding brand. It provides a suite of signs and how to use those signs to promote wayfinding. With that said, we are still in transition from older wayfinding to our new brand. So far, we have been able to install mile markers as well as kiosks at some of our most popular parks.

Some goals of this project are to inventory what we have so far and to connect with the DOT early on. Wayfinding plans had already been developed for the Chester Creek and Campbell Creek trails, and the goal of this plan is to focus on wayfinding for both the Moose Loop and destinations such as spurs along our trail system.

Overall this will create 150 new/updated directional posts and bike route post as well as a handful of kiosk areas. We are working on additional branding for routes such as the Moose Loop. While some new wayfinding will go in this year, we will likely be continuing this project through the next year.

### 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, August 10, 2023, at the Spenard Community Recreation Center.

### ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion made by **Commissioner Blair**, seconded by **Commissioner Vollendorf** 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

