



MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION



**MINUTES OF THE
REGULAR MEETING**

December 7, 2023

The December 7 meeting was held in person at Spenard Community Recreation Center.

CALL TO ORDER

The December 7, 2023, regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission was called to order by Chair Brian Looney at **6:05 p.m.**

ROLL CALL

Commissioners present:

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

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

Staff present:

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

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Upon motion duly made by **Commissioner Blair** and seconded by **Commissioner Kastning**, the Agenda for the December 7, 2023, meeting was unanimously approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Upon motion duly made by **Commissioner Vollendorf** and seconded by **Commissioner Wamsganz**, the Minutes of the September 14, 2023, meeting was unanimously approved.

DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

Mike Braniff--Parks and Recreation Director

1. **Winter:** This has been a wild winter, but we are doing our best to keep trails groomed. Luckily, we have gotten to groom some new locations including Delaney Park Strip and Northeast Connector Trail.
2. **Ice:** We are a little behind on ice, but Chanshtnu and Tikishla are up and running. Lakes are still a bit behind on ice depth.
3. **Tuesday Night Races:** Great numbers over the 7 weeks, and a 16% increase in folks racing.
4. **Haunted and Enchanted Trails:** 900+ folks at Haunted and almost 600 at Enchanted.
5. **Rec Center Staffing:** Staffing dipped in mid-September, but we are slowly regaining staff. Luckily, we had other staff that were available to help staff the facilities to make sure things continued to run. We are still trying to get the facilities back up to 7 days per week, but we are at least at 5 days per week.
6. **Capital upgrades:** A new safety camera system has been installed at Fairview and is up and running.
7. **Title 1 Outreach:** Free ski lessons for title 1 schools.
8. **Super Tour:** Happening in Anchorage at Kincaid.
9. **Maintenance/horticulture:** Fully staffed which is a nice feeling. Healthy spaces is closed to fully staffed.
10. **Camp Abatement:** We currently aren't abating camps because there is no shelter space. Currently, the largest camps are not on parkland (snow dump south of Davis Park, and the archive land next to Cuddy Park)
11. **Lifeguards:** Still trying to hire and retain enough lifeguards to run and cover
12. **Winter Solstice Event:** Come enjoy the event. It is a blast!
13. **Budget:** Budget has been finalized as of November 21.

DISCUSSION

- **Staffing levels:** Commissioner Looney, did you have any positions cuts?
 - o Cuts were made to vacant positions. But we are mostly staffed across many of our divisions.

NON-AGENDA APPEARANCE REQUESTS

Geran Tarr and Mai Xiong presented briefly about the Hmong Veterans Memorial as a non-agenda appearance request. The Hmong people are the indigenous people of Laos and Vietnam and played an important part in the Vietnam War. The proposed Hmong Veterans Memorial is a way to recognize their service. They have achieved about 1/3 of the total funding needs and are reaching out to the PRC to discuss design approval and how to contact JBER about approval. Davis Park is owned by JBER and leased to Anchorage Parks and Rec. The plan would be from here to work with Anchorage Parks and Rec and collaborate on designs in the future.

ANCHORAGE PARK FOUNDATION

There was no representative from the Anchorage Park Foundation.

ACTION ITEM

PRC 23-17: PRC 23-17 KFQD Park Improvements

PRC Resolution 2023-12

Presented by Nicolette Dent

Nicolette Dent, Anchorage Parks and Recreation planner, presented proposed improvements for KFQD park. This lovely little neighborhood park is tucked into the Bayshore/Klatt neighborhood. Prior to 1990 it was used as a dumping area for fill from local construction, then the Muni acquired the land and developed a small picnic area and playground. The playground is getting old, and it is time for some upgrades.

We started the project with a site analysis and soil survey to do a general inventory of the park and then started to work with the local community and community council to figure out desires. Unfortunately, the subsurface has poor drainage and creates uneven settling. Main goals of what neighbors want is to take care of what is there and keeping activation to the central area instead of moving along the edges.

At this time, we are proposing to improve drainage, create a new playground, and develop a bike loop and add a sledding hill. The proposal is start work next year (2024) and are asking Youth Employment in Parks to work on the bike loop. Funding comes from the 2021 bond.

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

PRC 23-16: PRC 23-18 Parks and Recreation Service Area 2024 Bond

PRC Resolution 2023-13

Presented by Steve Rafuse

Steve Rafuse, Anchorage Parks and Recreation Park Superintendent presented the proposed bonds for 2024. The bond totals 4.45 Million and gives a look at the next five years. Every year in March the municipality asks community councils to submit their capital improvement priorities. Included in our bond proposal is:

- \$250K for the Fairview Recreation Center, we already have about \$500K from a previous bond and will be used to improve this facility
- \$300K for inclusive playgrounds to improve playground development
- \$600K for Russian Jack Springs Park Safety and ADA improvements
- \$50K for the Fish Creek Trail to the ocean design process
- \$1.5M for the Coastal Trail to Ship Creek Trail Connection
- \$350K for Mt. View Park improvements
- \$100K for the Johnny Ellis Rainbow Bridge
- \$200K for the Sand Lake Dock improvements
- \$200K for athletic field improvements
- \$300K for the Eastchester Master Plan
- \$100K for Government Hill Park Improvements
- \$100K Chester Creek Sports Complex safety/security

We are really trying to promote a variety of projects that touch all parts of town and many user groups.

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

**PRC 23-16: PRC 23-19 Potter Marsh Watershed Park
PRC Resolution 2023-14**

Presented by Tom Korosei and Dave Mitchell with Great Land Trust

Tom Korosei, Anchorage Parks and Recreation Park land manager, and Dave Mitchell with the Great Land Trust, presented this action item. This is a request for Great Land Trust to acquire 200 acres of land in South Anchorage for conservation purposes ultimately to be combined with land managed by the Heritage Land Bank to create the Potter Marsh Watershed Park to protect this area that contains most of the fresh water for Potter Marsh. The Great Land Trust has been working with the Heritage Land Bank to complete this and the overall conservation goal aligns with the Anchorage Parks and Rec goals to conserve this watershed.

The Great Land Trust is a non-profit organization in Anchorage, and their goal is to conserve land specifically in southcentral Alaska. The Great Land Trust also focuses on access and recreation. The Potter Marsh Watershed Park is an exciting project to create a new park and to conserve the watershed in south anchorage. This area receives over 200K visitors every year and caters to birders, locals, tourists, and families. The eastern side of the property is currently own by GCI and the western side is owned by HLB.

Through this process we are acquiring the GCI property and then dedicate both the GCI land and HLB land to Anchorage Parks and Rec and include a conservation easement.

The idea of creating this park as been around for at least 18 years, and it is wonderful to see it coming to fruition. A contract has been signed with GCI and in total 2.6M has been raised and the Great Land Trust just received a 1.4M grant to cover the total purchase price. The hope is to go to the Assembly in the spring, and to close on the property in about a year.

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

INFORMATION ITEMS

PRC 23-20 2023 Construction Recap

Presented by Steve Rafuse, Parks Superintendent

Steve Rafuse, Parks Superintendent, gave a brief overview of 2023 construction projects:

- The Northeast Connector Trail was finished in Far North Bicentennial Park
- Elderberry Park was finished at the end of 2023 and we plan on doing a ribbon-cutting for it in 2024.
- Replacement of the bridges along the Tour Trail
- Chanshtnu Muldoon Park bridge addition to connect the playground area to the Community Garden area.
- Add walkway improvements to the Mountain View Boys and Girls Club
- Upgraded Russian Jack Spring Park Trails including repaving sections
- Started construction/expansion in McPhee Gardens
- Started work on the Taku Lake Skate Park which should be completed in 2024
- Ure Park Trail and Bridge
- The new Russian jack Springs Park Singletrack
- New Service High School singletrack

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, January 11, 2024, at the Spenard Community Recreation Center.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion made by **Commissioner Wamsganz**, seconded by **Commissioner Vollendorf** and unanimously approved, the meeting adjourned at **8:33 p.m.**

MINUTES APPROVED this ____ day of _____, 2024:

Brian Looney, Chair
Parks & Recreation Commission

Mike Braniff, Director
Parks & Recreation