



Municipality of Anchorage, Alaska  
**Parks & Recreation Department**

632 W. 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 630  
P.O. Box 196650  
Anchorage, AK 99519  
Tel 907-343-4355

URL [www.muni.org/departments/parks](http://www.muni.org/departments/parks)



## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** February 9, 2023

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**To:** Parks & Recreation Commission

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**Cc:** Mike Braniff, Director; Steve Rafuse, Superintendent

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**From:** Nicolette Dent, Park Planner

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**Project:** PRC 23-02 Russian Jack Springs Park Singletrack Trails

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### INTRODUCTION

Russian Jack Springs Park is one of Anchorage's oldest and most popular parks. The park spans over 300 acres in East Anchorage, featuring a range of developed facilities and large natural areas. The park's recently updated Master Plan – approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission in January 2022 – recommends the development of singletrack trails to provide new recreational opportunities and to activate underused space in north Russian Jack Springs Park.

Alaska Trails, in partnership with Anchorage Parks and Recreation, proposes to plan, fund, design, construct and maintain 3.1 miles of singletrack mountain bike trails in north Russian Jack Springs Park in accordance with the Master Plan. Alaska Trails is a non-profit organization dedicated to the development and maintenance of sustainable trails for "Alaska's people, communities, and economy." Singletrack are soft-surface, narrow trails sustainably built for mountain and fat biking, running, walking, snowshoeing, bird and wildlife viewing, and skiing. The proposed trails will incorporate existing social trails and maintain the park's natural character while making a popular activity more accessible to youth and thousands of East Anchorage residents.

### BACKGROUND AND COMMUNITY NEED

The popularity of mountain biking continues to grow in Anchorage and across the country. Kincaid and Hillside Parks offer developed singletrack trail systems, but residents of north and east Anchorage must drive 20-30 minutes to either destination. Russian Jack Springs Park is connected directly to surrounding neighborhoods, public transportation, and the Chester Creek Greenbelt trail system. During the Master Plan update, a survey of 436 people identified new singletrack trails as a top priority for future development at Russian Jack Springs Park.



**Above:** Map of Russian Jack Springs Park's north and south sections.

Russian Jack Springs Park both meets the demand for singletrack trails in East Anchorage and offers an ideal setting for trail development. The Master Plan identified a need to repurpose the underutilized area formerly used by Girl Scouts as a day camp in the area north of Debarr Rd. and south of the multi-use trail. The camp's footprint remains without a modern purpose and has attracted unsanctioned camping, dumping, and other undesirable activity to this area. Public discussion during the Master Plan update identified new uses such as singletrack trails to bring positive use and activation to this underutilized area, ultimately creating a safer environment for park and trail users.

**Below Left:** Existing social trails will be incorporated into new singletrack layout.

**Below Right:** Example of current undesirable use of the former Girls Scouts day camp area. Adding a popular recreation activity will encourage positive, safe, and healthy activity.



During the Master Plan open house, the public preferred north Russian Jack Springs Park out of three alternative locations presented for singletrack development. This preference was confirmed by the Community Advisory Group, the Parks and Recreation Commission, and the Planning and Zoning Commission. Alaska Trails raised funds to implement this recommendation and received broad support upon bringing a more detailed concept to the Russian Jack, Northeast, Airport Heights, and University Area Community Councils.

The Master Plan also discusses the high population of children in East Anchorage, demonstrating a demand for outdoor programs for youth. There are 20 schools within a two-mile radius of Russian Jack Springs Park, and some partner organizations already use the park as a classroom, such as the Anchorage Park Foundation and several mountain biking programs. New investment at the park will enhance these existing programs and create more opportunities to teach youth new outdoor skills year-round.

This proposal reflects core values that emerged during the Master Plan public process, including activating the park in all seasons, providing facilities that serve diverse park users, balancing natural areas with developed facilities, making the park safe and accessible, and inviting users to the park as a community-wide attraction.<sup>1</sup> The proposal also addresses goals in the park's *Natural Resource Management Plan*, including to protect water quality, manage forests for healthy recreation, and protect fish and wildlife habitat.<sup>2</sup> The singletrack trail development area is purposefully located on upland areas away from wetlands and sensitive natural resources. The design minimizes development impact by incorporating existing social trail footprints which will help keep future park users on sustainably-developed, designated paths.

<sup>1</sup> Russian Jack Springs Park Master Plan, page 81.

<sup>2</sup> Russian Jack Springs Park Master Plan, page 75.

## PROJECT PROPOSAL

This project will create a 3.1-mile trail system designed for the safe progression of mountain biking skills. The topography of north Russian Jack Springs Park is ideal for young, beginning, and intermediate riders, enabling them to increase their skills before progressing to steeper and more technical options at Kincaid Park and Hillside Park.

A one-mile, easy (green), two-way perimeter trail will appeal to mountain bikers, winter bikers, and snowshoers. Intermediate (blue) trails will connect sections of the perimeter loop and provide progressively more challenging terrain. A special skills development area will be located near the existing picnic pavilion and include small progressive features to build confidence and safe riding skills for beginners. This “Skills Loop” would be a first for Anchorage and something identified by the community as a high priority.

The development of singletrack trails in combination with Nordic ski trails has proven successful in other Anchorage parks and provides opportunities for year-round recreation in an underused area of Russian Jack Springs Park. The trail layout limits conflict with other park users, avoiding intersections with the paved multi-use trail. Singletrack trails will cross existing Nordic trails at 90-degree angles, much like the layout found at Kincaid Park. This allows for predictability and visibility for both Nordic and singletrack users.

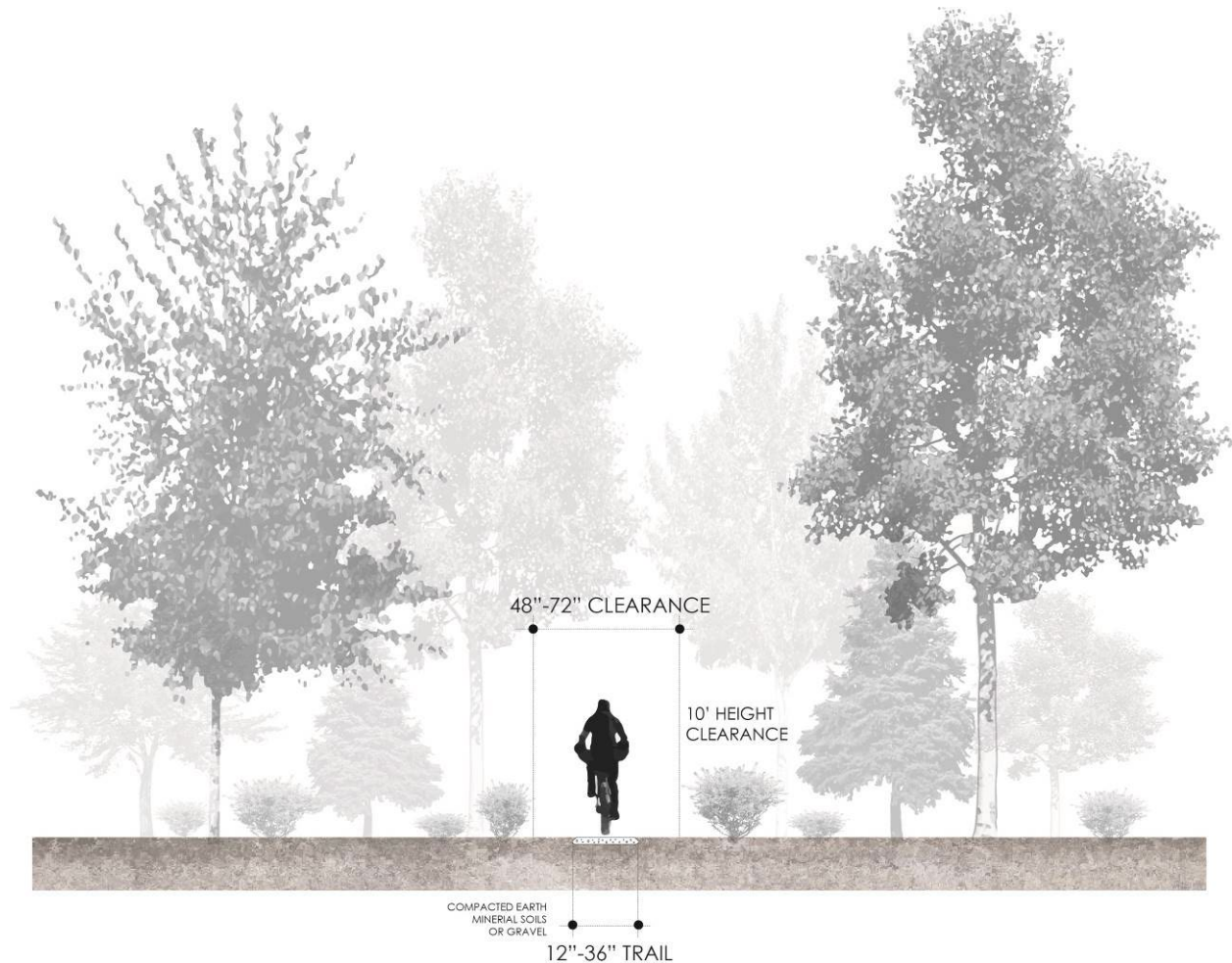
The Master Plan recommends the installation of kiosks with signage, maps, and wayfinding to help trail users navigate the trail system. This concept proposes wayfinding at access points, intersections, and select locations along the trail to alert riders of upcoming features. Kiosks will provide safety information alongside maps of new and existing trails, like the signage found at Kincaid and Mirror Lake Parks.



**Above:** Example from Mirror Lake Park of singletrack trails in a forested environment.

The location of singletrack trails in north Russian Jack Springs Park balances the community’s desire for new trails with the preservation of sensitive natural areas in south Russian Jack Springs Park such as the spring, the Middle Fork of Chester Creek, riparian areas, and wetlands. This proposal follows trail specifications outlined in the Master Plan. Organic soils would be removed and replaced with compacted earth and mineral soils or gravel along with added drainage features. Singletrack trails are designed to be 12” to 36” wide and cleared of brush between 48” and 72”. Intermediate trails may include the selective use of built features such as log rides, jumps and table tops, banked turns; similar to those found at Kincaid Park or Mirror Lake Park.

The proposal uses existing social trail routes where possible, minimizing impact to natural resources by using existing pathways and by keeping trail users out of vegetated areas. The design anticipates minimal tree removal and only where necessary to maintain user safety and sightlines. The proposal also follows Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) guidance such as maintaining sightlines and minimize blind corners to allow for better visibility of wildlife. It also incorporates signage and community outreach – both in the park and online – to educate users about recreating in areas with wildlife. As necessary, temporary trail closures may occur during moose calving season following guidance from ADF&G.



**Above:** Diagram from the Master Plan showing desired singletrack trail width, clearance, and soil types

## PLANNING AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The *Russian Jack Springs Park Master Plan* was approved unanimously by the Parks and Recreation Commission in January 2022 and received final approval by the Planning and Zoning Commission in April 2022. Alaska Trails was one of many community partners to participate in the Master Plan update, along with neighbors, Community Councils, elected representatives, and a variety of park user organizations. Letters of support for this proposal come from the Anchorage Park Foundation, Arctic Bicycle Club, Mighty Bikes, Singletrack Advocates, and six East Anchorage legislators.

As part of its grant application to the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), Alaska Trails was required to post public notice of the proposed project on site. In addition, Alaska Trails has delivered presentations to the following groups:

- Russian Jack Community Council: Presentation and Resolution of Support passed on October 12th, 2022
- Northeast Community Council: Presentation at November 17th, 2022 meeting

- University Area Community Council: Presentation at November meeting and Resolution of Support passed on December 7th, 2022
- Airport Heights Community Council - Presentation at December meeting and Resolution of Support passed at January 19th, 2023 meeting

Following the PRC meeting, Alaska Trails will bring the proposal before the Urban Design Commission in spring 2023. Phase 1 of construction is planned for summer 2023.

### FUNDING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Alaska Trails is targeting construction of the proposed project for June 2023 through the fall of 2024. Funding has already been secured through private sources and grants, including an Anchorage Park Foundation Challenge Grant. Grant applications are currently pending for a Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant through the State of Alaska and a federal grant through the National Park Service Outdoor Recreation Legacy Program (ORLP).

Trail construction will be implemented in phases. The priority for Summer 2023 is to develop the outer Green Loop, green connectors, and the north access point. This will primarily include the transition of social trails into singletrack and the minimal use of machines. If pending grant funds are awarded, construction will move west with the addition of intermediate trails (Blue Trails 1, 2 and 3), and the Skills Loop around the picnic shelter. As additional public/private funds are secured or federal funds are secured through the OLRP grant, additional phases will build out the intermediate jump and drop trails. Wayfinding installation would accompany each phase.

For over two decades, Alaska Trails has been building and maintaining trails in the southcentral region. In partnership with Parks and Recreation, Alaska Trails will manage project planning, design, and construction. Alaska Trails has hired a professional trail designer and will contract a builder for the project upon approval. Summer 2023 construction of singletrack trails will be a combination of a professional trail builder, volunteers, and the Youth Employment in Parks program. Pending additional grant funding, future phases will utilize a similar approach.

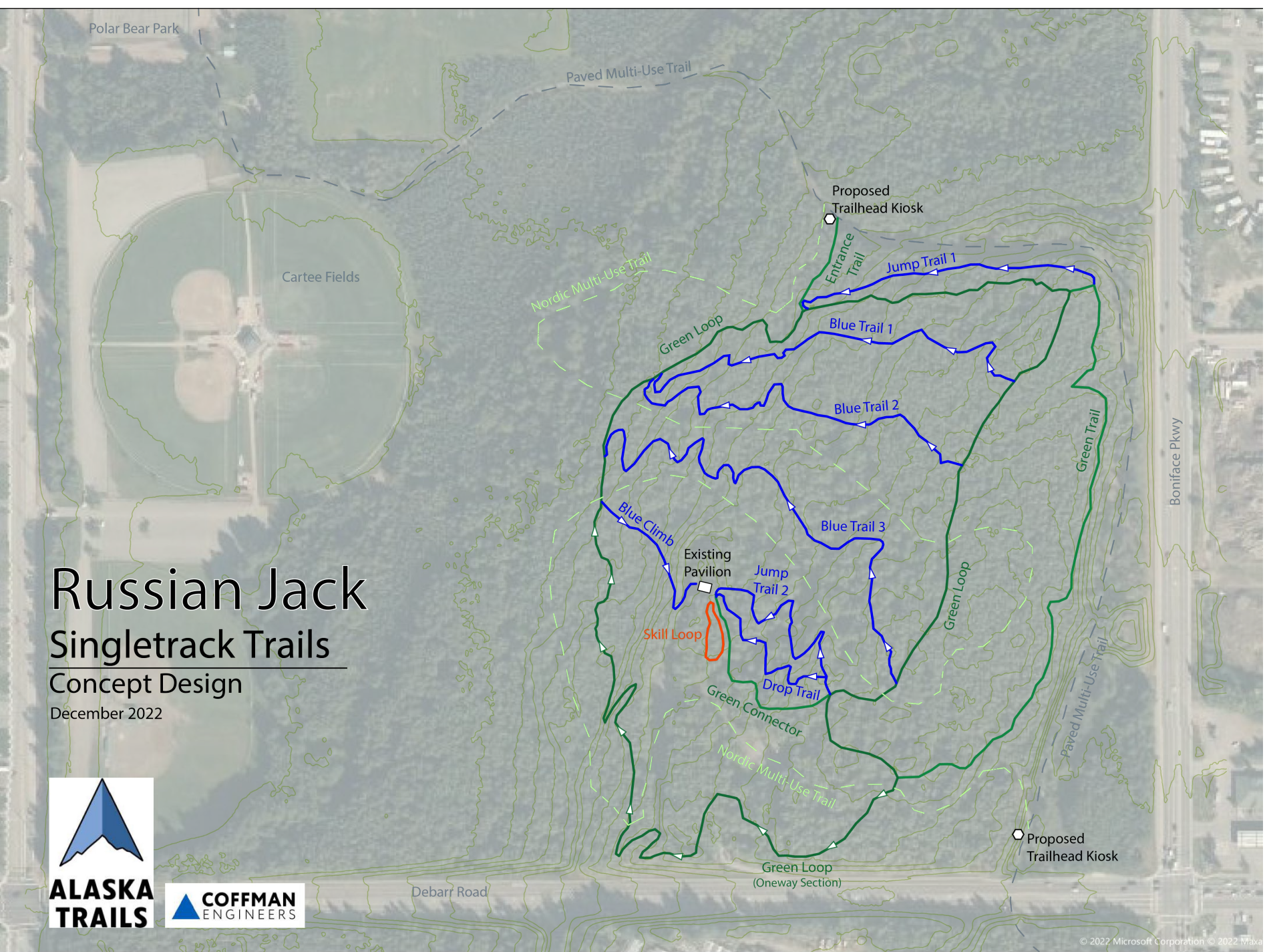
### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department recommends that the Parks and Recreation Commission support the Russian Jack Springs Park Singletrack Trails project. The project has emerged as a priority for the community and was recommended in the Master Plan. The trails will bring a positive recreation to an underused area of the park and will provide new opportunities for recreation and outdoor programs to East Anchorage.

TRAIL	MILES	TRAIL DESCRIPTION
<b>Green (Beginner) Trails</b>		
Green Loop	0.99	Flowy beginner trail
Green Connector	0.1	Flowy beginner trail
Green Trail	0.29	Flowy beginner trail
Entrance Trail	0.04	Flowy beginner trail
<b>Blue (Intermediate) Trails</b>		
Jump Trail 1	0.14	Jump trail with two parallel jump lines
Blue 1	0.2	Flow & Technical trail with banks, jumps and drops
Blue 2	0.19	Flow & Technical trail with banks, jumps and drops
Blue 3	0.28	Flow & Technical trail with banks, jumps and drops
Jump Trail 2	0.12	Jump & Technical trail with wooden roller features
Drop Trail	0.1	Technical trail with different height drops
Blue Climb	0.1	Technical climb trail with rocks and roots
Skill Loop	0.1	Skill area with a wide variety of wood and rock features
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.7</b>	

# Russian Jack Singletrack Trails

Concept Design  
December 2022



## Russian Jack Mountain Bike Trail Project Photos



Terrain is perfect for mountain bike trails. Away from wetlands and on a moraine ridge line.



Existing structure will be repaired and repurposed as a meeting space with benches, bike racks and tool kiosk surrounding the skills loop.





Project area is currently underused, and has attracted illegal activity like camping and dumping.



Social trails to be incorporated into new trail system. New trails will have minimum impact on existing multi-use trails.

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Senator Bill Wielechowski

Senator Forrest Dunbar



Representative Genevieve Mina

Representative Andrew Gray

Representative Stanley Wright

Representative Donna Mears

January 26, 2023

*Sent via email*

Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission  
632 West Sixth Avenue  
Anchorage AK 99501

Dear Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission,

We are writing to offer support regarding Alaska Trail's Russian Jack Mountain Bike Trails project that would provide introductory mountain biking trails to East Anchorage. Approximately 45 acres of mountainous terrain on the park's northern edge have been set aside in the updated 2022 RJSP Master Plan for the construction of these mountain biking routes. These trails would be easily accessible to many Anchorage residents and would offer a critical connection with the existing Chester Creek Trail.

As East Anchorage representatives, we recognize the importance of developing a trail network that allows for the safe growth of mountain biking abilities in youth and novice riders. This provides a way to engage members of the community in outdoor recreation and add to Anchorage's world-class recreational trails. We also recognize the opportunities for increased collaboration between Alaska Trails, the Municipality of Anchorage, and the neighboring communities.

We stand ready to assist in any way we can to further the discussion about this proposed project. Thank you for your attention on this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Wielechowski".

Senator Bill Wielechowski  
Senate District K

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Forrest Dunbar".

Senator Forrest Dunbar  
Senate District J



Representative Genevieve Mina  
House District 19



Representative Andrew Gray  
House District 20



Representative Stanley Wright  
House District 21



Representative Donna Mears  
House District 22



January 24, 2023

Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission  
632 West Sixth Avenue  
Anchorage AK 99501

Dear PRC:

The Anchorage Park Foundation strongly supports Alaska Trails' project to build mountain bike trails at Russian Jack Springs Park and urges your support as well.

The Russian Jack Mountain Bike Trails project is partially funded by APF's Community Challenge Grant Program and will employ the Youth Employment in Parks program to build the trails. Alaska Trails received a \$35,000 grant from us, \$8,000 from the non-profit youth cycling club Mighty Bikes and applied for a \$187,000 Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant through the State of Alaska. The project will build beginner and intermediate mountain biking trails, and in the process activate a space that has been underused for recreation and overused for illegal camping.

The proposed mountain bike trails conform to the updated, 2022 RJSP Master plan for 45 acres of hilly terrain on the northern side of the park. These trails would be within biking distance for many Anchorage residents and will be easily accessed by the paved bike path that links to the well-used Chester Creek Trail. The trails will also be a two-minute bike ride from the very popular Polar Bear playground and skate park.

Alaska Trails has a proven partnership with the Municipality of Anchorage and APF, providing training for YEP, a 10-week summer program that hires Anchorage teens to complete park improvement projects. Teens learn natural resource management job skills by building trails and increasing civic engagement. We urge your support for this important project.

In Community,

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Beth Nordlund".

Beth Nordlund



January 18, 2023

Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission  
632 West Sixth Avenue  
Anchorage AK 99501

Dear PRC:

Singletrack Advocates (STA) is pleased to provide this letter of support for the Alaska Trails' Russian Jack Mountain Bike Trails project.

STA is a trail advocacy nonprofit that has constructed and maintains over 30 miles of trails in Anchorage, and we appreciate how valuable Anchorage's parks and trails are to the community. The Russian Jack Mountain Bike Trails project would provide access to beginner and intermediate level mountain biking trails for the kids and families living near Russian Jack Park and the entire Anchorage community, which will allow users to safely improve their mountain biking skills. Access to trails encourages residents to get outside, stay active, and have fun. An added benefit is that this project will be easily accessible from existing bike paths in Anchorage.

This project has already received community support and the Russian Jack Springs Park Master Plan has designated a portion of the park for the development of mountain bike trails. STA has worked closely with Alaska Trails on multiple projects, and we believe this project would result in a high quality and sustainable singletrack trail system in east Anchorage.

Sincerely yours,

Lee Bolling, President  
Singletrack Advocates

PO Box 221382 Anchorage, AK 99522  
[www.singletrackadvocates.org](http://www.singletrackadvocates.org)    [singletrackadvocates@gmail.com](mailto:singletrackadvocates@gmail.com)  
Singletrack Advocates is a Non-Profit 501(c)3 Organization  
EIN: 26-1437999

Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission  
632 West Sixth Avenue  
Anchorage AK 99501

To whom this may concern,

On behalf of Mighty Bikes Board of representatives, I am pleased to write this letter of support for the Russian Jack Mountain Bike Trails project. Mighty Bikes as an organization values increasing trail access for all persons, especially adolescent bikers; which is why this project is particularly exciting. Trail development at Russian Jack is expected to increase accessibility to families in East Anchorage and cater to young and developing riders with the inclusion of beginner/intermediate trails, BMX compatible trails, and proximity to Polar Bear Park. Mighty bikes is especially enthusiastic about the intention of a project focused on the safe progression of mountain biking skills, particularly for young and beginning riders. Additionally, with proximity to over 20 neighborhood school students, numerable students will have increased opportunity to learn and play outside all year round.

In August of 2022 Alaska Trails was a recipient of Mighty Bikes grant monies in the amount of \$8,000. Board Members were unanimous in their enthusiasm to support a project that expands beginner and intermediate trails in Russian Jack and increases enthusiasm for families and adolescents utilizing trails across Anchorage. Alaska Trails has proven to be an essential agency in Alaska, expanding trail access across our state and partnering with local agencies to improve and expand trail access in Anchorage. Mighty Bikes is excited to be supporting a well-established agency and looks forward to the opportunities for all to enjoy first class mountain bike trails at Russian Jack.

Sincerely,

*Petra Davis*

Petra Davis  
Mighty Bikes  
Board Member

Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission  
632 West Sixth Avenue  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

We, the Directors of the Arctic Bicycle Club (ABC), support the Alaska Trails initiative to build mountain biking single track trails in Russian Jack Spring Park.

ABC's mission is to promote bicycling safety, education, and competition and we offer riding and racing opportunities for all ages, including free racing for youth under 18.

As a local cycling non-profit we have seen first hand the need for development of trails in the Anchorage Bowl. Mountain biking, cyclocross, and snow (fat) biking participation have significantly increased over the past several years. For the past 2 years, our Mountain Bike and Cyclocross divisions have focused on fostering the development of youth (Junior) skills and racing by purchasing skills development ramps and features and instituting a new Junior race series.

An important aspect of our initiative is education and having trails in North East Anchorage would also create a space for youth to develop those skills. With 20 schools within a 2 mile vicinity of the park, youth will have opportunities to ride their bikes to Russian Jack and enjoy hours of outdoor time developing a healthy lifestyle. They will not need to traverse the city to Kincaid or Hillside to come to races or skills clinics.

Our community has supported and fostered these developments and we are lucky to have Alaska Trails invest the energy and time into making these dreams for our youth come to fruition. The Russian Jack Mountain Bike project will be a great asset for the neighborhood and the Anchorage community as a whole.

It is gratifying that the 2022 Russian Jack Springs Park Master Plan has designated the 45 acres for this development. The park is a hidden gem in the middle of our urban landscape providing a unique Alaskan opportunity. Tying many threads together: utilizing the Youth Employment in Parks program to build these trails, as they have done in Kincaid, will hopefully entice those youth to ride the park once it is complete!

Sincerely,  
Arctic Bicycle Club Board of Directors  
Megan Chelf  
Tol Fishburn  
Eric Flanders  
Natasha Graham  
Jeff Levin

Justin Neff  
Chris Wrobel



PO Box 240062  
Anchorage, AK 99524  
(510) 478-4279  
[dev@bikeanchorage.org](mailto:dev@bikeanchorage.org)  
[info@bikeanchorage.org](mailto:info@bikeanchorage.org)



January 31st, 2023

Dear Parks and Recreation Commission,

I am writing to express Bike Anchorage's support for the Alaska Trails project to build mountain bike trails at Russian Jack Springs Park.

The majority of the recreational areas in Anchorage are not accessible to people that do not own a car or use public transportation, i.e., Arctic Valley, Hilltop, Kincaid Park, etc. Offering people that use their bicycles, the bus, or walking as their mode of transportation the opportunity to access a recreational area will fulfill the Anchorage residents' need.

The updated 2022 RJSP Master plan has designated approximately 45 acres of hilly terrain on the park's northern side to develop mountain bike trails. This project will help accomplish that. The trails will be a two-minute bike ride from the Polar Bear playground and skate park. Mountain biking is a great activity for kids and young people; it improves their physical and mental health, develops confidence, increases coordination and balance, and the continued exercise builds stamina and improves cardiovascular development.

The park's location will help get people out on trails and encourage kids and young people to ride their bikes to the park and school because there are 20 schools within a two-mile radius of the project, with access points on all sides of the park.

Alaska Trails plans to utilize the Youth Employment in Parks (YEP) for a portion of the construction, and we know this project will build a healthier and more bike-friendly city.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Devora Barrera". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Devora Barrera, Director  
Bike Anchorage  
EIN: 94-3452069

1                   **UNIVERSITY AREA COMMUNITY COUNCIL (UACC)**  
2                   **RESOLUTION 2022-003**

3  
4                   **SUPPORT FOR RUSSIAN JACK MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAILS**

5  
6   **WHEREAS** the Anchorage Municipal Charter Part, VIII, Sec 8.01 establishes  
7 Community Councils as representatives for neighborhoods in planning and  
8 development; **and**

9  
10 **WHEREAS** Community Councils are intended to reflect actual neighborhoods and  
11 provide guidance advice on management of lands within their boundaries; **and**

12  
13 **WHEREAS** Russian Jack Springs Park (RJSP) is centrally located, shared and enjoyed  
14 by all east Anchorage neighborhoods, and is one of Anchorage’s oldest and most popular  
15 parks; **and**

16  
17 **WHEREAS** the recently updated (2022) Russian Jack Springs Park Master Plan  
18 designated approximately 45 acres of hilly terrain, on the northern side of the park, for  
19 the development of mountain bike trails; **and**

20  
21 **WHEREAS** the project helps activate the northern half of RJSP and brings accessible  
22 mountain biking trails to a significant number of residents and youth; **and**

23  
24 **WHEREAS** the non-profit Alaska Trails is working with the Municipality of Anchorage  
25 to build beginner and intermediate level mountain biking trails to implement the updated  
26 RJSP Master Plan; **and**

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28 **WHEREAS** the funding for the project will be raised by Alaska Trails and will be  
29 constructed by Youth Employment in Parks and professional trail builders; **and**

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31 **WHEREAS** the project will utilize many existing trails, will avoid wetlands, use  
32 ADF&G recommendations on wildlife corridors, and will ensure safe trail crossings;  
33 **and**

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35 **WHEREAS** the specific project plan will be reviewed by the Parks and Rec  
36 Commission prior to construction.

37  
38 **NOW THEREFORE** the UACC hereby resolves:

39  
40 That the Russian Jack Mountain Bike Trail Project is consistent with the updated

41 Russian Jack Springs Park Master Plan and the UACC supports the advancement of the  
42 project for construction in 2023.

43

44 **Resolution Vote:** For: 14                      Against: 0                      Abstain: 0

45

46 This resolution was approved by the University Area Community Council this 7<sup>th</sup> day of  
47 December, 2022.

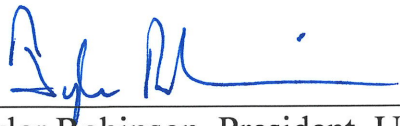
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Tyler Robinson, President, UACC

AIRPORT HEIGHTS COMMUNITY COUNCIL  
RESOLUTION 2023-2

A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE RUSSIAN JACK  
MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAILS PROJECT

WHEREAS, the Russian Jack Mountain Bike Trails project seeks to bring beginner and intermediate level mountain biking to one of East Anchorage's most centralized parks. The updated, 2022 Russian Jack Springs Park Master plan has designated approximately 45 acres of hilly terrain, on the northern side of the park, for the development of mountain bike trails;

WHEREAS, Alaska Trails has received an Anchorage Park Foundation Challenge Grant for the project and is applying for a Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant to fund the project;

WHEREAS, the proposed trails will provide a local, safe place for mountain bike riding on the eastside and will give the community and its residents a fun, healthy and accessible place to develop biking skills and a healthy lifestyle;

WHEREAS, schools within close proximity to Russian Jack Springs Park that could take advantage of the new trails include: East High School, Winterberry Charter, Russian Jack Elementary, Nunaka Valley Elementary, Wonder Park Elementary, Williwaw Elementary, STREAM Academy, Highland Tech, Whaley School and the Alaska Native Cultural Charter School;

WHEREAS, Airport Heights Community Council is a community in this area and looks forward to our families and neighbors having access to this recreational opportunity.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Airport Heights Community Council supports the Russian Jack Mountain Bike Trails project and its efforts to seek funding for construction of the trails.

THIS RESOLUTION WAS APPROVED by the Airport Heights Community Council on January 19, 2023 by a vote of: FOR 17, AGAINST 0, ABSTAIN 0.



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Chelsea Ward-Waller  
President

# Minutes

Northeast Community Council (NECC)

November 17, 2022, | 7pm

Centennial Village- Multipurpose Room

9131 Centennial Circle, Anchorage, AK 99504

\*NECC minutes are always taken by a volunteer board member

## **Board Members**

**George Martinez**, President | **Lyn Franks**, Treasurer | **Ron Meehan**, Secretary | **Bob Reupke**, FCC Delegate | **Selina Metoyer**, Member | **Stu Grenier**, Member | **Murray Crookes**, Member | **Donna Mears**, Member

## **George Martinez Calls Meeting to Order at 7:02 PM**

39 people were present virtually or in the room.

## **Pledge of Allegiance**

## **Board Roll Call**

## **Minutes Approval: [October](#)**

**Bob Reupke motions, Murray Crookes seconds**

## **Treasurer's Update**

Lyn Franks reports \$1919.68 in the bank account.

## **FCC Report**

**Bob Reupke:** The FCC met yesterday for two and a half hours. Something that was not on the agenda was the honor flights that go from Anchorage to Washington DC for about a week. It gives the veterans time to walk around Washington, DC. They've had the flight since 2013. They transport about 349 vets and the next one is April 23 and it's full. Margo Bellamy gave a report on the school district and they're going to have a lot of town halls and budget meetings and hopefully they're going to make some sort of decision by December 10 as to the extent of the cut. There's going to have to be a lot of cuts because they're \$68 million in the hole. Tom O'Malley spoke on the Girdwood cemetery. These are sites they're looking for to start cemeteries in Girdwood and Eagle River and Chugiak. The Assembly is in favor of this. It will cost about \$11 million about \$9-12 a year. We have a resolution in support for areawide proposals for cemeteries and I have a copy of that I will pass around. Suzanne LaFrance was there, she's in favor of the cemeteries. The next budget meeting is going to be on November 22, this coming Tuesday. They will go over the election codes and change to title 21. Hans Thompson from South Addition is bringing forth a noise amendment. Some of the pick up trucks are really, really loud. I asked if this was going to go up to these boom boomboxes and he said it was strictly for the cars. There will be no FCC meeting in December. The FCC budget is \$90,000 and they have purchased insurance to the tune of \$4950 to cover all of the liability for the community councils. So if we change locations we need to let the FCC know. There's another issue on 92nd St underpass under the Seward highway, there's a lot of consternation on this. It's to the tune of \$112 million and to me it looks like kind of a waste of money. There is a meeting I guess tonight, is that right Pete?

**Pete Peterson:** Amass meeting this afternoon.

**Bob Reupke:** They said the freeway does not need a six way between O'Malley and Dimond. This is going to be a very expensive deal and the DOT wants to go through with it. I think there's a lot of people that are not in favor of it.

**Stu Grenier:** Bob, was there any discussion about homeless folks still tenting it?

**Bob Reupke:** No, there was no discussion. I asked Suzanne LaFrance about the navigation center, she said that's still up in the air. She would like to see it built but it's probably not going to go until next year, until they get a tap on what this thing is going to cost. This navigation center is located near the cop shop on Tudor road. They have cleared the land but they've stopped working on it.

### **Community Concerns and Activities (opportunity for community members to share concerns, requests for the council, and upcoming needs/activities, 2 min each)**

**Jude Metoyer:** I just wanted to reintroduce myself, you may have seen me or at least heard me at the last meeting. I'm Selina Metoyer's son. I just returned home and just want to help out. I spent the last few years working predominantly on charitable giving and community focused projects and events all over the United States. I'm looking to bring those skills back home and help out in our own community. It's nice to be back, nice to meet everybody. My first name is Jude like the song.

**Stu Grenier:** I'm trails and parks chair for the Northeast Community Council. I invited the folks living under the tree about 300 yards over here to this meeting, that's why I was late. I brought a pizza and I told them we've got pizza. I'm not sure what they look like but they're homeless and they've been under that tree for three weeks. I called the Mayor, I talked to Steve with Parks and Rec, emailed twice, and I reported the tent on Anchorage #works. Which is, usually this gets things done. So my question for everybody here tonight is: what is the role of the council when the government fails? I have a problem with sitting in my living room- I don't even know what race these people are, I'm not sure what they're going to look like if they do come. I talked to them through the side of a tent and they said they had a dog and there's a woman in there too. Anyhow, I'm here on top of the hill and they said ya we're coming. Somebody dropped the ball and I was told by someone who I'm not going to name that this was not going to happen and I just went to Russian Jack and it was so comfortable there. I'm just saying guys we could open it up in there from 10PM to 8AM and run it like a military operation. It's got clean hot water, running restrooms, let them set their tents up, pay one security guard, let them watch TV all night or whatever. Then get them all out of there by 8AM and then let the skiers and hikers and dog walkers use it. They just need a warm place to sleep. What they do in a day, I don't know but having people under the trees where we have to look at them. I was out at 4AM walking my dog at weird hours and I could see their candle. This is 50 yards behind my dumpster. Nobody cares, I don't know what else to do. If they come, I told them they don't have to say anything.

### **Legislative Reports (limit 3 min. each, including questions)**

**Maya Narang, Rep Spohnholz:** Since we last met we have sent a letter with our Co-Chair of the House Committee on Labor and Commerce Representative Fields to the FTC about the Albertsons-Kroger merger. Albertsons and Kroger are currently trying to merge. In Alaska, in our five largest districts they are the primary competitors for groceries and we have some of the highest costs of groceries in the nation. We have sent a letter to the FTC to intervene and block this merger on behalf of our legislature. Also since we last met, the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee has continued to meet. We released a sunset audit of the state medical board. They continue to find in all of our audits that we've had come out recently that the biggest issue in our government right now for why we're having all of these discrepancies with our agencies is a shortage of workers. The Legislative Budget and Audit Committee also approved an RPL of \$10 million of COVID relief funding for fish processors. There are some more RPLs that will be also related to processors that are currently being evaluated whether they'll pass either in December or go to the next legislature to pass. Just a note there are town halls for the school closures coming up. There's a bunch of them at the end of November. Abbott Loop, Klatt, and Wonder Park will all have town halls at their schools coming up and then there are online town halls for all six of the elementary schools that are being proposed to be closed on the 30th, the 29th, and December 1st. Those are at 6PM and you can access them on the ASD website, Facebook, or Twitter.

**Bill Wielechowski:** Thank you for your support in the last election or if I didn't have your support I look forward to representing you anyway. The big issue in the last few weeks, in the last couple months, has been the school closures. I've been to many meetings, I was just at a School District meeting yesterday. I will be at the Nunaka Valley one next week. What we've learned is that the closure of the Nunaka Valley school, according to the documents that we've been seeing, will save about \$245,000 out of the \$68 million deficit. That is the heart of that community in Nunaka Valley. I've got my staff working, trying to figure out ways to slow that down, stop that. I've been having a lot of conversations with school board members. One of the interesting and concerning things is that the school district has tens of millions of dollars in COVID

funds remaining. They could use that to fill this budget gap but instead what they are planning on doing- or what they are talking about doing is using \$34 million to rebuild a brand new school in Inlet View, which is a wealthy area. We have five title one schools on the chopping block. Title one schools are low income schools. I think it looks terrible and it's maybe not the greatest policy when you have one school in a wealthy area and politically connected school and you want to close lower income schools. I think optics look terrible and it would be a big mistake for the school board to do that. So I'm working on a letter to the school board to say that. Otherwise, after the elections we are working on organizing. The House and the Senate are both trying to organize. Basically what that means is that whoever gets to 11 first is in the majority and being in the majority means you control gavels, committees, and things like that. So I've been very active in having discussions in that regard along with Forrest Dunbar. We've been having a lot of meetings and I think you can expect an announcement in a week or so. Nothing guaranteed, it could completely fall apart but I feel pretty good at this point.

**Ari Wiggin, Rep. Liz Snyder:** My notes have been addressed by the previous speaker but I wanted to emphasize joining us at the town halls that are listed on ASD's website for the school closures. If you haven't been able to make it to a town hall, if the timing hasn't worked for you please send your notes to us at Representative.liz.snyder@akleg.gov so we can communicate those to the school district. Otherwise I would emphasize joining Kristi Woods' efforts in petitioning to keep the Nunaka Valley School open. If you have any other questions I will be around.

**Bud Simms:** What are they going to do with the kids when they close the school. Where are they going to go?

**Ari Wiggin, Rep. Liz Snyder:** They're going to split them up. We've been in communication with the school district but the information that we've been given is they're going to split them up in other nearby schools. I believe Nunaka is going to Chester Valley and Russian Jack.

**Bud Simms:** They're thinking about closing five schools, how many kids does that curtail?

**Ari Wiggin, Rep. Liz Snyder:** I don't have those numbers off the top of my head. I'd love to take your questions down and if any of them remain unanswered our office can bring them to the administration as well.

### **Assembly Reports (limit 3 min. each, including questions)**

**Forrest Dunbar:** On behalf of Dan and Chris, they are currently at South Addition Community Council. I was just at the Airport Heights Community Council, Campbell Park Community Council also meets at this exact day and time so it can be a little bit complicated.

**Pete Peterson:** If anyone is interested, we have got the 2023 budget on our agenda for next Tuesday. I'm not sure we're going to be passing that, we have a bunch of amendments that we went over earlier. I'm expecting if we don't pass it we will be discussing it for several hours. It's a continuation budget, it's approximately \$20 million larger than last year's budget and most of those increases are because we have contracts increasing with the personnel that we have to pay.

**Forrest Dunbar:** I'll say it's the largest budget in Anchorage's history and the Assembly hasn't even touched it yet. It's just that the Mayor has proposed a \$583 million budget. It's not going to increase services but there have been these inflationary costs and it's not just one budget it's four or five budgets. It's the operating budget, the capital budget, the utility, I think that's all. We'll be working on all of those on the 22nd, if we don't pass one or more of those it will go to the next meeting- the first meeting of December. We've already had a number of work sessions on the budget, we've had two public hearings. I'm the Budget and Finance Committee Co-Chair. Myself and the other Co-Chair will be bringing forward an omnibus amendment that will propose a lot of the changes that the Assembly is asking for. I'll say that those are relatively small. I think our omnibus amendment is now about \$3 million out of again \$583 million. A majority of the budget will probably stay the same. The largest single program that the Assembly will probably ask that the Mayor change is what's called the mobile crisis team, the mental health first responders program which the Mayor cut last year. We restored it and then he vetoed us and we overrode him. This year he took it out of the Fire Department and absorbed it into a different program in the Police Department called the mobile intervention team which is a similar but different thing. We believe the solution is probably to restore the mobile crisis team but also keep the Mayor's increased investment in the police force. They are complementary and we can have sort of a hybrid model that my colleague Meg Zaletel is working on and we have enough surplus funds to do that. One of the interesting stories about the municipality is that despite the budget shortfall with the school district and some of the problems we can see on the horizon with the state, the city's finances are in pretty good health and they have been for a number of years because we sold LMP and put that money in a trust. Because we passed an alcohol tax and a fuel tax. We have increased and diversified revenue and because of that we have a surplus. We also just recently got

\$23 million in SMT funds from the federal government that we weren't expecting. Medicaid reimbursement for prior services rendered through our ambulance service and this is \$23 million that we can decide what to do with. Last meeting we decided to purchase a number of fire apparatuses with those: two engines, two ladder trucks. That was about \$6 million I think and we are still discussing what to do with the remaining \$17 million.

**Pete Peterson:** Since our last meeting a month ago they did an inspection of the Golden Lion Hotel and came up with a list of the areas that need to be repaired or have improvements made. They're in the process of going through the hotel and making those repairs. When they finish those they will do another fire inspection and if that passes then it's possible we will be getting close to allowing people to occupy that facility. It's also been designated as a rooming house since it's been designated as that, we will be able to use that to put individuals, some of which may be currently staying at the Sullivan Arena.

**Forrest Dunbar:** That's similar to the designation for the Guest House downtown which has been another successful project to house people experiencing homelessness. We also heard from the Rasmusson Foundation that they are closing on two hotels, one they'll close before the other with 85 units of housing in Spenard. Some of those can be double units too. We're hoping that if we turn that hotel on and the Golden Lion and there's an additional facility with 45 beds- all of this is money we have already set aside under the ARPA program- we can hopefully get folks out of the Sullivan Arena. That is what everyone wants to do. Unfortunately, we also have the issue of the Aviator hotel hanging over us so we'll have to find additional housing for those folks once that hotel, they want to end their relationship with the city and return to being a regular hotel and there's about 200 individuals in that space.

**Pete Peterson:** We have a new librarian, we haven't had an official librarian in about a year and a half or so. Virginia McClure started on October 17 and the library employees that I have spoken to have all spoken glowingly of her and are very happy with the choice. She has the required experience and education. Hopefully we have reached the end of that controversy.

**Forrest Dunbar:** We also at the last meeting confirmed a new head for the Municipal Airport. Richard Sewell who lives in East Anchorage actually. He comes to us from the State Department of Transportation where he worked in statewide aviation. So he came highly recommended and he passed unanimously. I had a good conversation with him. He has a vision for what the municipal airport can be as an economic generator going forward. Particularly to me he highlighted that there's a lot of federal funds out there for drone businesses and drone research and Merrill Field might be a good place to house some of those businesses.

**Stu Grenier:** Well I heard all about the housing which I hope will help the people we have to look at in the woods and I'm sure you're going to make sure that happens. I thought we weren't going to have to deal with this. I thought it would be taken care of but I hope something can be done. They can hear us if you shout out the front door here.

**Forrest Dunbar:** You're saying there's an encampment near here?

**Stu Grenier:** Yes and it's on Anchorage #works and I called the Mayor. I think you got emailed too but then I also sent it also to Steve.

**Forrest Dunbar:** I don't know that I got that one but I appreciate you still being on top of that. We don't abate camps if there isn't room but I think there is room in the Sullivan Arena right now so hopefully Parks and Rec can go out there.

**Stu Grenier:** I think there's a dog out there too. It's very frustrating and I am afraid something is going to happen and we're all going to feel very bad.

**Forrest Dunbar:** I agree. I will say this, I've done the point in time count where you go out in the early morning and you speak to individuals experiencing homelessness. What some of them will tell you is that I don't want to go to Brother Francis or the Sullivan Arena where it's hot and crowded and dangerous and someone who assaulted me is there. But I am willing to go to housing even if it's a very small room and that's what we're standing up in the next few months. Hundreds of units of new housing. If the Mayor allows us to turn on the Golden Lion and the Rasmusson Foundation is able to use our money to purchase and close on these hotels which they expect to. If that's the case, then we can have folks contact those people and hopefully get them into housing.

**Bob Reupke:** What are your thoughts on the navigation center? It's going to cost way too much.

**Forrest Dunbar:** I think it is unlikely to move forward. The Assembly voted 9-3 against it. Pete and I have been opposed to it since last year or I guess early this year. I don't need to go into all the details but basically there was a scandal where they went forward and spent about \$3.5 million without Assembly approval. Dug a big hole in the ground, put some rebar in it and then ran out of approved money. The cost had really bloomed- it was up to \$15 million. For \$15 million, for example we're about to buy two hotels for



\$12 million, and so it was just getting dramatically more expensive and it's way more expensive to operate. That's something else that's really important. Those housing units and those hotels, you can get certain kinds of federal operating dollars to run those kinds of housing units, they go with the person that's housed. So they get very close to breaking even and we can supplement them with alcohol tax money and they can be pretty self sustaining. Shelter isn't like that. You can't get federal funds for shelter in the same way. So it would be dramatically more expensive to operate that facility. That facility failed 3-9. We still own the big tent, it's sitting in the lower 48. Maybe they can find a way to use it. They spent \$2 million on that thing and maybe they can find some use for it as a storage facility or something. Maybe someday something like that can go forward. I will say this though, it was a shelter. They kept using the term navigation center. There's a navigation center in the Sullivan Arena, there's a navigation center planned for 3rd Avenue. They kept calling it a navigation center, if there is no housing or treatment to navigate to it's just a shelter. It was a euphemism.

**Brian Burke:** Concerning the homelessness in Anchorage, is there anything being looked at other than providing housing?

**Pete Peterson:** There's an entire home for good program that was created probably four years I believe. There are a number of programs that are available, but you have to find the individual and figure out which program they qualify for or what they're interested in or what they're physically able to do. It actually takes a lot of coordination and that's why they have navigation centers in other communities around the country. It's to navigate some of the homeless to some of the programs so they can get job training or whatever it is to try to get them off the street.

**Forrest Dunbar:** There's more than one kind of housing. So you have what's called extremely low income housing. I think people will be surprised by how many folks experiencing homelessness work. It's actually a surprisingly large percentage even at the Sullivan Arena. So some of these folks will work but it will pay much lower than market rates. We also have a treatment facility that we tried to stand up at the Golden Lion but now it will probably move to a different location. We did stand up something at Fireweed called the Sockeye Inn which is complex medical care for people that have medical needs and they can get medicaid funding. It's mostly elders. So there are a variety of programs but the general policy and best practice- that I think there is actually pretty good uniform, the mayor, coalition to end homeless, and the Assembly believe is that the solution to end homelessness is housing. It really is the single best way to get somebody off the street, stabilized, and where they can hopefully turn around or remain. Housing is our primary focus.

**Brian Burke:** Do you project other programs, or is it just we're going to house folks and see what happens?

**Forrest Dunbar:** Well we've never, in the history of the city, stood up as many housing units as we are standing up now. I think it's going to make an appreciable difference.

**Pete Peterson:** 332 this year.

**Forrest Dunbar:** We got a report from the coalition and we've just never had these kinds of resources before. After the alcohol tax came online and some of the federal funds that we received we just have much more resources to finally address some of these issues. So I'm cautiously optimistic that what has worked in other parts of the country will also work here. I'm being a little bit simplistic. If you talk to the coalition to end homelessness they will tell you about a million programs that they run. But for us, it's primarily treatment and housing. I will be here if we have a special meeting to pass the Nunaka Valley Resolution, which I hope we did. I share my colleagues' sentiment about saving Nunaka Valley Elementary School. This will be my last regular meeting of the Northeast Community Council. I have been coming to these meetings for six and a half years but I've been elected to the State Senate and my new district is further to the west. You have two great Senators with Löki Tobin and Bill Wielechowski, and so I just want to say thank you so much. I will always have a special place in my heart for this part of town and if you ever have anything please send me an email or give me a call.

**Community Leadership Updates as available (3 min each)** [JBER](#), [Mayor's Office](#), [Police Department](#), [Fire Department](#), [Parks & Recreation](#), [Muldoon Public Library](#), [School Board](#), [Community Patrol](#), [others](#).

**Joy, JBER:** Just a couple of quick updates for you. On November 25 at about 8AM if you look up toward Arctic Valley you'll see that the star is going to be turned on. So please keep your eyes peeled for that. I posted some information in the chat for your records. There's also a good article that our public affairs team put out. This year instead of going the old Griswold thing like that with the plugs the engineers are actually going to be able to press a button and turn the lights on from way down here on base. The other thing that I want to let you know about is that the office of local defense community cooperation- every year they put out a report regarding military activities by state- that will tell you the number of military people, whether it's active duty, reserves, contractors, civilians, by service as well and also the economic impact. The OLDCC is

the name of this organization, they put out their report for FY 21. I realize that that information is now over a year old but it's still interesting and it's out there if you are curious about it. There's a link in the chat There's the State of Alaska report and you can also check out the reports for all other 49 states.

**Stephen D. Ward:** Earlier today there was a loud explosion, whether that be the engineers testing out the mortars or munitions, playing with danger buddy, but it did rattle our buildings a little. Is there a way we could actually get an update of when they're going to do that so I can tell my community hey there's no danger, you don't need to go run into your fort. Keep wondering where things are coming from because not only did I go but about ten or 15 others were like where did that come from and finally it clicked that they are doing mortar or explosive training.

**Joy, JBER:** Thank you, I think it was also tracked on Alaska Twitter. Other folks noticed it, thank you for pointing that out. Our public affairs folks do send out an update to the FCC. If you're on the FCC mailing list you'll get that update every month. In that posting for this month they did identify there is an exercise this week. I didn't say it because it's basically over now but that's what that was. It was just an exercise on base, just local to us. There were loud noises, emergency vehicles, sirens, and loud giant voids from speaker systems but thank you for asking, that's a good question.

**Aaron, Nunaka Valley Patrol:** For folks who don't know me, my name is Aaron Pascar. I have lived in Nunaka Valley for the past 48 years. About 27 years ago I opened up Nunaka Valley Community Patrol, so I've been doing that for quite awhile. The continuation of that needs to be kept going because I figure hopefully I can retire from it in about three years. We're doing a pretty good job, we have what I call a want to be a cop car. It looks like a cop car, it's a marked car, it has headlights on top and all this in Nunaka Valley and it does help. The other patrols that don't have marked cars, they use their own cars but we make sure they have signs on their cars because if they're driving around slow, someone is going to call the cops on them. So if someone is driving around slow we make sure they have identification. We have pretty much the same problem as everybody else with the homeless. Campsites are up in different places and whatnot. Our biggest fight again is the Nunaka Valley school closing. I have three generations that went to that school and sure don't want to see it close down. So we're fighting like heck and Kristi, thank you for all the work you're doing on that. It takes a lot of coordination but I think is I got up and spoke and I told the Assembly, the school board, I realize that school is a business and you have to run it, but our kids are not business and it affects them a lot. Every time you pick up a kid and put them someplace else you're going to have downfalls or back falls or whatever you want to call it. It is going to affect them and the family and whatnot. What scares me is that it affects the whole family, the older kids, if it affects them they're going to be out in the street doing things they're not supposed to be doing. Closing these schools is quite ridiculous. It is going to increase crime and low level stuff that the kids shouldn't be doing. We are watching that. If you could say something, say it loud, please. We need to keep these schools going, they're all title one schools and they're all from low income families. So we want to make sure that they're especially taken care of.

**Selina Metoyer:** I just want to make a comment that he has been faithful and loyal and he has protected the community for all these years and sometimes by himself.

**George Martinez:** He is outside at the end of school days making sure that the kids are safe now. He mentioned he wants to help keep things going. Let's talk with Mr. Pascar after our meeting if people are interested in volunteering or getting involved with the community patrols, this is a starting point.

**Kelly Lessens:** I hope you all are doing well, life on the school board feels very relevant right now. It is humbling and heartbreaking and all sorts of things all at the same time and yet I still choose to see the opportunity in this important role. The kids are exceptional as always. We had a busy school board meeting on Tuesday night. A lot of folks speaking up about programs that were important to them, particularly the immersion program. A lot of folks speaking out about the proposed school closures and repurposing. Many folks may be aware, there have been six schools that the district has suggested we do something different with to provide more efficient services to our students. For five out of those six schools the idea is to repurpose them and the sixth school the administration is suggesting would be disposed of and returned to the municipality and that school is Abbott Loop. The other five schools are Birchwood up in Chugiak, Klatt Elementary in southwest Anchorage, Nunaka Valley and Wonder Park in your neck of the woods, and Northwood across town. We've had four town hall meetings so far and the administration makes a 20-30 minute presentation on how we did we get here to this \$68 million fiscal cliff and what exactly does a school repurposing or closure entail. There have been opportunities for community members to ask questions or share what's on their heart. Students were singing last night as a demonstration of their community. The school is their family and it's their community. I think each community has offered a really beautiful portrait of who they are and what they care about. There are young families and walkability is really important and preschool is important and the culture and students resources that are offered. There are all these wonderful things that we're hearing but at the end of the day, the Board has got to pass a balanced budget

and we need the community's help to move forward. We cannot be fractured. We've got to approach our legislature and our Governor with the demand that we need adequate funding. Our students need adequate inflation adjusted funding. So for the upcoming fiscal year that's an \$860 difference between what we are slated to receive and what we need to receive. \$860 is the increase just to adjust that base student allocation for inflation. I wanted to share that we have two more community town halls coming up. Monday night will be at- Wonder Park is Tuesday and Abbott Loop is Monday. Monday and Tuesday of next week and then on, after Thanksgiving on the 29th and 30th also from 6-8pm there will be virtual town halls on the six school closures. There will be an opportunity for the same public process as school board meetings. Members can sign up to testify by 5PM the day before and that will help with translation needs. You will get three minutes to testify or ask questions. December 1 will be another virtual town hall really focused on relocation and repurposing. We also had a communications committee meeting today, member Wilson chairs that committee, we will have- there is a second survey open to the public. We are looking for feedback and that will probably remain open through December 2. So I will say that is the latest news that I have to share and I would be happy to pause and answer questions you have.

**George Martinez:** Just to confirm that those surveys will be available in multiple languages?

**Kelly Lessens:** Yes, It is my understanding that the surveys will be available in multiple languages and I was really impressed to hear that at each of our town halls the IT department has set up a bank of chrome books on sites and they are available in different languages already ready to go. There's also hard copies in addition to the online survey. If you're going to a town hall you're kind of a captive audience there and that's an excellent opportunity to access those surveys but they should be available if you go to [Asdk12.org/fy24](https://Asdk12.org/fy24) That is the homepage for all of the budget solutions.

**Kristi Wood:** A number of neighbors and myself have been emailing the board some questions about how you arrived at the utilization numbers for Nunaka and we've got some- either no answers back or the answers we get back we don't understand. We've been referred to some websites and we're digging through the websites trying to find what's the information, why did you send me this link, or the DEED formula which we've looked at and don't understand. Some really simple questions. For instance, a pre-k classroom has a lower cap than a grades classroom, so are you taking that into account for utilization numbers in Nunaka Valley since we have so much pre-k there? There are also some resource rooms in the school that they're not allocated to a teacher, they're used every day but by different teachers at different times. Is that an empty room when you calculate utilization since it is not assigned to a teacher? It would be really awesome if we could at some point get some answers to the utilization questions.

**Kelly Lessens:** Great question, I have similar questions. The Board has not received any more detail than what has been released to the public. My understanding is that we will receive some kind of report in early December. The way I have found is navigating utilization figures, and I'm trying to understand that myself, you can go to- ASD has a data dashboard and there's an enrollment portal and you can look at detailed enrollment for any school. You can click on and look at the enrollment data dashboard for any school, look at Nunaka Valley and you will see the number of students there. There are two tabs; there are enrollment and detailed enrollment and with detailed enrollment, I have found it helpful, you can look at pre-k, kindergarten, etc. There is also often detail, I'm not sure about the resource question, but that will give you a breakdown of who's enrolled at every school. Then you can compare that, and I'm sorry this is really a lot of digging that I'm telling you to do because that's what I'm doing. We have a capital improvement place, and there is something called a six year CIP. You can go, there's a ton of data in it. It's all online, and if you go to the most recent one which is for 2022-2028, there's data sets towards the back and it will tell you what the capacity for every school is. I have been trying to match up current enrollment figures with- I'm trying to get that answer as well. I don't have any more detailed information for you so I apologize.

**George Martinez:** We have a question online which is can you confirm that the meeting on December 2nd is open to the public?

**Kelly Lessens:** Yes, it's my understanding that all of these virtual town halls are all open to the public.

**George Martinez:** I have one more question and then I want to encourage people to continue to follow up with you and everybody has your contact information. One of the questions that came to me after the Nunaka town hall, was when people talk about population shift and decline in Anchorage, do we have specificity to what that actually means to our area? Or are we included in an aggregate number and have we not lost population?

**Kelly Lessens:** The district hired a consultant who has been working on numbers and a number of other inputs. I have not yet heard that there is hyper local data about birth rates or rent or a lot of other variables. He has a number of plans, just general overall trends for Anchorage using birth data that's linked to PFDs but I'm not sure to the extent to which it is hyper local.

## **Committee Updates (limit 2 min. each)**

### **Public Notices:** [Uncle Herbs](#)

**George, Placemaking:** Nothing to report.

**Donna Mears, CIP:** Capital improvement project committee. The CIP list that was submitted to the municipality last spring will be the basis of our capital project requests to the state legislature. The session starts January 17th. The only addition I have received since then is from non motorized user safety improvements on the road from Bartlett High School to the Alaska Native Heritage Center. If I have missed anything or if you have any additional items from parks to potholes please get in touch with me through the community council email at [northeastcommunitycouncil@gmail.com](mailto:northeastcommunitycouncil@gmail.com) and cc my personal email which is [mears@alaska.net](mailto:mears@alaska.net).

**Jamie Lang, Alcohol and Marijuana:** We have an update that we got from FCC on Uncle Herbs. The application on there says they're- I don't really understand it. I've read it multiple times and I asked Ryan from the planning department to please update the website because there's no application and we don't really know what Uncle Herbs is trying to do, it's incomplete. I also put public comments on there that there's nothing to look at, the application isn't on there so we don't know what they're trying to do. Hopefully he will get back to me tomorrow. If anybody else has other public comments about we don't know what they're trying to do they can submit them by December 6th.

**Stu Grenier, Parks and Trails:** We did pull quite a bit of trash out of Centennial Park. It seems like the muni did a great job of cleaning up the campground, they neglected the woods between the campground and Boundary Ave. There's two more piles that you can see sticking out. There's a burn barrel. Things that you can get to the side of the road and I think the muni would get them. Some of them might get taken to some other location if we don't get them. Also, with the Boundary Trail which is the trail that Scenic Foothills and this council are talking about trying to get a realignment on the boundary between the civilian and the military and get a bike trail on the gas line connecting the Ship Creek Bridge with the Campbell Creek Greenbelt. I was surprised to get an email from Chugach Electric, they bought the powerplant which is right over here and guess what they want. They want solar panel fields, guys it never occurred to me that the gas line is perfect north-south. Can you put solar panels next to a gas line? I don't know. Anyhow, they are very interested, so I sent them a big jpeg of the proposals. Also, Ron, were you on the radio yesterday?

**Ron Meehan:** It was Tuesday, Talk of Alaska discussing statewide food security.

**Stu Grenier, Parks and Trails:** Okay Tuesday, I heard Ron on the radio and I called in and get on the radio too and talked about trails and stuff like that. Anyhow, we're just talking about it. We're going to get together and work on the letter to JBER. Ms. Boston I'm sure will get a copy and have suggestions because they sent a nice letter. Those discussions are happening and everyone is welcome to get involved.

**Stephen D. Ward:** Solar panels around gas lines, as long as they're kept enough distance away couldn't that also provide enough power to help with any new lights that go in the area, and any emergency access systems?

**Stu Grenier:** Guys I'm totally naive about this subject so I talked about it with Chugach Electric. I see this massive solar panel field in Willow, that's 30 miles now and said boy if they can make it pay there and he said we can't find a place to put it, property is too expensive here. They have a questionnaire if you want to go to Chugach Electric to do their questionnaire on solar power. It's probably 30 questions. Anyhow, Chugach Electric will be part of the discussion from now on too. I did talk with Steve about the Chanstnu Muldoon dog park, about the mud problem. As some of you may remember, we pressed to get gravel and they put grass and now-next summer we are going to talk about gravel again because more people will use it and it's just a mud hole without gravel.

**Lyn Franks:** I thought about that a lot because my little dog likes to go to the dog parks but they're always muddy and nasty and he's really low to the ground. So instead of gravel, how about astro turf? Is that possible? It might be cheaper and easier to clean.

**Stu Grenier:** Well maybe we could get Bartlett's when they're done with it because I think it had a ten year lifespan and it's been there for 7 years. I don't know. Picking up after the dogs, I would much rather do it with gravel than grass. It's just a surface area question. Astro turf, it never occurred to us but we could include it in the discussion. I don't let my dog on astro turf, where would I get the opportunity to know how that works? Because you can't go to Bartlett and use theirs.

**George Martinez:** Do you have a date for the doon danglers?

**Stu Grenier:** Okay guys here's the deal. My condo is full of stuff. So I do the danglers in batches. By the way, everybody is welcome. If you specially want to have a picture of you putting up those danglers on the

light poles up and down Muldoon road there I will arrange it for you. Bob and I have been doing it and you know, everybody has helped a little bit. The thing is I can't move them all at once.

**George Martinez:** When?

**Stu Grenier:** Some time during Thanksgiving break.

### **Presentations (limit 3 min. each, unless otherwise note)**

[Russian Jack Bike Trails](#) - Steve Cleary (4 mins)

**Steve Cleary:** I'm the Executive Director for Alaska Trails. I've been using Russian Jack for many years and I'm really excited about the updated master plan and what's going to happen there. Every time I think about Russian Jack or give a presentation like this I think of all the ways I and my family have used Russian Jack over the years. For my son's birthday party to cross country running, cross country skiing, events like the Tuesday night races. We biked there for some of my son's last days of school. Holidays in the greenhouse, skateboarding for my son. Playground, I think I played snowshoe softball there maybe 20 years ago in what feels like another life. I'm really jazzed about Russian Jack and my coworker and I both have sons who grew up going to junior nordic skiing there and now they're skiing for East High School and using those trails a lot. We were advised to wait for completion of the master plan which we were happy to participate in. I would like to thank all the Northeast Community Council members who helped with the updating of that master plan. Now as part of that plan, these would be beginner and intermediate trails for bikers who we hope would access the trails by biking there. There are 19 schools within a two mile radius of Russian Jack and so we're very excited for young people to be able to bike and recreate there close to their neighborhood. It's close to the playground, it's close to the skate park, it's close to other great parts of Russian Jack. From our last iteration of bike trails we were proposing for Russian Jack, we've heard from the community through the master plan process, we've moved them all to the northside out of wetlands and away from the springs. We're utilizing social trails. There is a lot of trash to clean up in the areas we want to work on as well and we hope that bringing more people to utilize the trails in the area will make them safer. We also have the advantage of learning from the other trails built on the hillside at Kincaid Park to make sure there are sight lines for people and wildlife safety. To make sure where trails do cross multi-use paths, which they won't very much in our design, there's a safe place for those to coexist. We have gotten good support from the Anchorage Parks Foundation. We've got the challenge grant, we've got letters of support from the Single Track Advocates and Mighty Bikes and so we're excited to bring another recreation opportunity to people in the area blending in with the other many great uses at Russian Jack and making sure that the design for the trails are fun, safe, and sustainable for people. We are working very diligently with the muni park staff to finalize the design. We have applied for a recreational trails program grant which we hope will bring funding for the project and it will move forward in 2023.

[Checkpoint Subdivision Lot 2](#) - Kate Sauve (3 mins)

**Kate Sauve:** We're proposing a unit lot development. Basically the idea is to create a garage town so each unit will have two bedrooms and a two car garage. There will be 53 units. This is going to go through the Assembly since it's a unit lot development. That's about it, it's not very complicated. The parcel is five acres and it's located off Boundary Avenue and WhisperWood Park Drive. If you have any questions I will be in the back here. We will be holding a zoom meeting to go over this in more detail and cover community concerns on December 7th at 6PM and I will have the details of the zoom and you can come and ask me for those.

### **Old Business (Limit 10 min/item including discussion)**

[NACTO](#) - To amplify support for NACTO plan/concepts/policy

**Marc Grober:** What is NACTO? NACTO is the National Association of City Transportation Officials and it's the premier source, and it has been for the last 20 years, of design guides on how to provide safe sharing of our transportation corridors. The Federal Highway Administration, which is arguably the chief arbiter of what it means to have safe streets in our country, has adopted large parts of NACTO design guides because NACTO does such a great job. The designing for all ages and abilities PDF was a separate report that NACTO produced to add to its urban design guide and it has now in fact been added to that broad design guide as a manual. If you buy it it's hundreds of dollars and hundreds and hundreds of pages, there are links if you want to look online. Some time ago I submitted a resolution to the Assembly basically suggesting that we affiliate with NACTO and that we formally adopt their design guides. This followed a history of the community trying to get the municipality to do something about safety on our streets. Despite

this repeated effort, let's just say that the people in charge with a capital T have over and over again made it impossible to promote safety on our streets through affiliation or adoption of the NACTO guidelines. If you want to see what NACTO membership means and why hundreds of municipalities participate and belong to NACTO you can go to NACTO.org and look at the membership. It will tell you all the reasons why all these communities are members. What I would like to see the Assembly do is move forward with the resolution and the Assembly has basically said until community councils want us to do something, we aren't going to do something. So I've been pushing the community council to get familiar with NACTO, get familiar with the NACTO guidelines, and become knowledgeable enough that we can promote such a resolution to the Assembly.

**George Martinez:** I do have one clarifying question before I invite a motion. The complete streets policy from AMATs references NACTO and NACTO reports, is part of the question here to include this new designing for all ages report or how does that work with the complete streets and existing reports with NACTO that have been accepted by AMATs

**Marc Grober:** That's a tricky question because while AMATs has repeatedly said we want to endorse NACTO guidelines. In every case where they have adopted any kind of plan, NACTO is simply referenced as another tool. So AMATs, and this is a really complex area of discussion so anyone who gets confused by the acronyms, there is a lot to work through here. That's one of the reasons I put together this lengthy resolution because it had links to explain all the acronyms and what have you. AMATs has never adopted any of the NACTO guidelines and technical staff have specifically told the bicycle and pedestrian committee that they may not recommend AMATs adoption of the NACTO guidelines. AMATs is composed of DOT and the municipality and the municipality holds three of the five seats. The only way we are going to get AMATs to comply with NACTO guidelines is get the municipality to adopt it and force the municipality members of AMATs to promote the NACTO guidelines.

**Marc Grober motions to develop a resolution from the Northeast Community Council to support the designing for all ages report and encouraging the municipality to adopt it as part of their other NACTO adoptions, Stephen D. Ward seconds**

**Unanimous vote to approve**

### **New Business (Limit 3 min/ item including discussion unless otherwise noted)**

[Accessory Dwelling Unit Ordinance](#) - Dianne Holmes, RCCC

**Dianne Holmes:** We don't know when this will come actually, I don't think it's been laid on the table, we don't even have a case number. I am Dianne Holmes from Rabbit Creek Community Council and along with Rogers Park we have been very interested in trying to get other councils attention on the ADUs, Accessory Dwelling Unit Ordinance which actually was revised in 2018 and a lot of us are concerned that it hasn't had time to see how it works. This is not about whether there should be ADUs because that's already in code, this is about the details that will provide for more housing and it's about neighborhood integrity and cohesiveness. I personally think a lot of us prefer this ordinance be delayed until significant revisions can be made or delaying it indefinitely. It's not ready for prime time. How does this affect you? ADU ordinances across the US have resulted in unintended consequences mainly because of short term rentals, STRs. We know they're more profitable certainly but they do nothing to increase resident housing, and certainly not affordable. They're disruptive to neighborhoods especially if owners do not live on the property. Hawaii and Washington, D.C. now have conditions for STRs, some work better than others and I believe if I understand correctly, Sitka is really having a lot of problems with STRs. My concern and a lot of Rogers Park Council- we're all concerned with this ordinance- I don't think the planning department has looked closely at what other cities have done and are trying to redo regarding ADUs. A few points for this ordinance are that the intent or mission statements have been totally removed from the 2018 ordinance and we cannot allow this to happen because those purpose statements are the heart of any ordinance. The purpose statements explain why those regulations are important and how they work for a particular community. They do state community values just as the mission statements and policies in our 2020 land use plan state that. Don't be confused, the 2040 land use plan is only a subcomponent of our 2020 plan. They also record the intentions of the regulations and they guide commissions and staff when variances or tradeoffs are requested. We don't want to remove the current purpose statements and that's what's being done with this proposed ordinance. We want to encourage the need for additional resident housing. We all know we need that. The purpose statements should be there to state the intent. A range of housing including affordable, and for a mix of housing for changing needs and for smaller households in some instances. These purpose statements state that ADUs should be compatible with neighborhood character. ADUs should be lower in height and smaller than the main dwelling to preserve lot setbacks and shadowing. The Roger's Park resolution definitely hones in on that. One of the planners is telling people that with two buildings of the

same height, they won't cast more of a shadow than one building. I don't know but that doesn't make any sense to me. The owner should reside there for at least six months of the year to provide for neighborhood cohesiveness and that is in the 2018 ordinance. They should be limited to a certain number of days per year, regulated like b&bs or other hospitalities. Some cities have a cap of 90 days a year, you can decide. By ignoring the language of STRs it actually equates to a policy decision that they are more desirable than resident housing. If it is decided that STRs belong in another title, staff should prepare that and we should vote concurrently with that as well as this ordinance. If that's not done, things will fall between the cracks. Density calculations, ADUs should be included in the city's future density calculations for future rezoning and for determining the levels of infrastructure and services. It's not done now.

**Stephen D. Ward:** ADUs from what I've read in the past are generally mother in law suites that are separate from that. STRs tend to be more decorative and be more secondary building on a property. Is there a way to make sure STRs are not involved in this? We already have enough hotels in this town, we need more sustainable rentals or mother in law suites.

**George Martinez:** The question was about the definitions and honing in on the difference of ADUs and STRs and making sure that the intent of ADU ordinance and code change words is maintained.

**Dianne Homes:** ADUs are actually in the 2020 plan and I think they're mentioned in the 2024 land use plan which is a subcomponent. It's more profitable if you rent it out like an airbnb but that doesn't help us and that's not the intent of ADUs when you go back to the 2020 plan.

**Marc Grober motions that the Northeast Community Council join in the Rabbit Creek Community Council resolution on the review and recommendations for the ADU ordinances, Selina Metoyer seconds**

**Dianne Holmes:** Roger's Park would like someone to sign onto their resolution as well.

**Murray Crookes:** Just to be clear, we are seeking to increase residential housing by taking this step?

**George Martinez:** Yes

**Voted unanimously to approve with no objections.**

#### **[Nunaka Elementary support resolution](#) - Kristi Wood**

**Kristi Wood:** I have a spot on the table back there where you can sign up if you want updates on this issue. There is also a petition if you want to sign it, we will be presenting that to the school board in favor of Nunaka Valley. A couple of really quick updates, some highlights. We found out the school district will lose money by consolidating these schools. It gets a little complex but there's a differential that's given to smaller schools and the school district will not be getting any of that money once they consolidate the schools. If you go to [savenunaka.net](http://savenunaka.net) we should have something posted pretty soon that explains it better than what I have time for right now. You've also heard they're only going to save \$240,000 by closing Nunaka Valley. The board is about to vote on the Inlet View rebuild; they want to spend \$37 million on it while simultaneously closing six schools, five of which are title one. I asked the utilization questions because we have a neighbor that works at the school and she's very confused because the school doesn't feel only 65% full, it feels really full. So as you heard tonight, I asked the school board for clarity for how they came up with those utilization numbers. They don't even know which really worries me because this is the body that is going to make this decision. How can it be an informed decision if they don't even know if the utilization numbers are correct. Many, many concerns with the closures. Somewhere between 1600 and 2000 families are affected if they close all six of these schools. Obviously some of us who live in the neighborhood are concerned about things like our property values if that big building is empty or not used at its full capacity.

**George Martinez:** I would entertain a motion for the Northeast Community Council to support this resolution for saving Nunaka Valley Elementary to be passed at a special December meeting. I want to be clear about that because we don't meet in December and this is a timely issue so we would be voting both on the resolution and to hold a special meeting in December to approve the resolution so folks have time for a public review.

**Stephen D. Ward motions to pass a resolution saving Nunaka Valley Elementary to be voted on at a special December Meeting, Marc Grober seconds.**

**Stephen D. Ward:** It is my understanding that our area is highly dense with the amount of families, new families, families affected by poor people. Yet we're starting to build new schools in richer areas where doctors, lawyers, and other people with higher influence. That doesn't seem very fair to me, I don't have kids, I don't have a family, but I do understand that education is the only way to get out of that kind of recession of poverty. How is it that they can make that decision so quickly and without any merit?

**Kristi Wood:** Definitely a question best left for the school board. I would suggest you email your comments to the school board and the superintendent. 12/5, so if you could have your special meeting before 12/5 because that's the decision point. Technically they don't announce their decision until the 19th but the 5th is our last opportunity to testify at least in person. By all means, contact the school board. The last school board meeting was packed so if you've got something to say you might want to get those comments in early.

**Unanimous vote to take up this resolution opposing the closing of Nunaka Valley Elementary and to hold a special meeting on December 1st to pass the resolution.**

#### [10 yr Community Council Boundaries Review](#)

**George Martinez:** We're up to the ten year community council boundary review. Every ten years part of the redistricting and all that happens. If people have any comments for the Assembly or for this process to know feel free to forward them to us as well. I would encourage you to go back to the agenda online and go to the hyperlink that's in there and and you can see all the notifications.

#### **Centennial Park 2023 Usage Plan**

**Stu Grenier motions to develop with the Parks and Trails Committee a Centennial Park usage plan as a resolution to be submitted to the Department of Parks and Recreation and the municipality, Aaron Pascars seconds**

**Stu Grenier:** We were right here about 15 years ago. The council at that time did pass a motion in favor of privatizing the management of Centennial Park. Then when it came to the Assembly nobody bothered to come and stick up for it. The idea was to let one of the private camper parks like the Gold Nugget, if they're interested, manage the park instead of Parks and Rec. The idea is, after talking to numerous managers over the years, the muni actually advertises the park on literature for RVs and stuff like that. I don't know if that still continues but we used to have a guy named Tommy Bishop who managed the park for years and he reminded us when he left, if the muni doesn't advertise the park on these advertising sites the profits are going to take a massive nosedive. That's something we can talk about if that's the direction we want to go again. I walked the park before it was repurposed and you could see that people were coming in there and they were dealing. People were parking their cars on Starview Drive and walking through the woods to camp spots and then walking back to their cars. I'm not sure that was a big problem 20 years ago, I'm not sure if someone wants to privatize it now because they would have to pay for security that you wouldn't previously need. All these questions need to be included in some kind of motion and we need to talk about it with all the parties. The people who do have those RVs do tend to go to the businesses in downtown Muldoon. They weren't there anymore. Nobody would be there. That's what we want to think about. Somehow also use this effort to get the Muldoon Chamber of Commerce off the ground that we've talked about for decades. That's probably the different sides that I hope to come out of it.

#### **Community Announcements**

**George Martinez:** I wanted to highlight that we have a special guest with us tonight. This person has been with us all summer long on the front line of Centennial Park and I had the privilege of cosigning a certificate of appreciation that was given to this person from the Scenic Foothills Community Council. Their idea was basically, wouldn't it be great to have both of the far east community councils saying thank you to this person. I thought it was an important step so I signed onto this certificate of abbreviation for Roger Branson. Roger was in the park, the lead advocate, helping people every single day in Centennial Park and also just ran an election as a Republican in Eagle River. Your commitment to our community is well noted and I wanted to make sure that every person here also heard that as well. It was a privilege to sign off on that. Roger, thank you for being with us.

**George Martinez adjourns meeting at 9:01PM**

**Upcoming NECC meetings: Jan 19, 2023**

**Respectively submitted by,**

**Ron Meehan, Northeast Community Council Secretary**



## RUSSIAN JACK COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

6:30 PM, Wednesday, October 12, 2022

At Zion Lutheran Church – 2100 Boniface Parkway

Present: Ed Leach, Kathleen Plunkett, Tammy Hanson, Lori Pickett, Andrew Gray, Carl Battreal, Dan & Sherry Wright

Present via ZOOM: Lindsey Hajduk, Kendra Kloster, Keelin Baughman, Ted Eischeid, Maya Narang, Genevieve Mina

Meeting was called to order at 6:33 pm by President Kendra Kloster.

1. Welcome and Land Acknowledgement We are meeting on Dena'ina Land – grateful for their care and sharing the land with us. Received a call that public was not comfortable at the last meeting due to some racist comments and so did not return. This is a community space and we want everyone to feel comfortable attending the meetings. Comments about unhoused public discussion made it uncomfortable and consider if our conversation was kind, helpful. We need to be thoughtful and respectful. Lori felt responsible for not doing her part to run a better meeting. Ed spoke that the homeless are not one group – one common answer doesn't apply to everyone. If we don't discuss the sub-groups, we will not find solutions. Lori stated she would say in the future that a comment didn't feel comfortable, this isn't the place for that discussion and we need to stay focused on the agenda. One who stated homeless were in her backyard came to seek help from the council on how to address it, so her comment was not perceived as racial, but as discussing a problem. Kendra said multiple community members felt the same thing. Sherry asked a few questions of how to move forward. Kendra or whoever is running the meeting will make a point to speak up and keep order. We should be able to share our views, but being respectful. It is best to address the issue of disrespectful comments when they occur. Kathleen also mentioned the fact that having hybrid meetings makes it more difficult and awkward to address the issue. Pete Petersen said the Assembly had an incident with someone that was speaking very racially, which also becomes a free speech issue, but the Assembly was similarly trying to figure out how to deal with it. Kathleen said that the FCC had a presentation on homeless – with cross cultural training. Daryl Hess is the ombudsman and can perhaps be a resource. The discussion led to anticipating more people attending. Wonder Park has a bigger space - Tammy Hanson will reach out to the IT Dept and see if there is conflict with having our council meeting with ZOOM and in person attendees. Ivy said we may consider reaching out to Immanuel Presbyterian (which is in Nunaka Valley). offered AK Literacy Project classroom, but would have to switch to 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday evenings. Will discuss potential meeting locations at the next meeting.

2. Anchorage Police/Fire Station Report - no report

3. Legislative report (3 minutes each)

Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson (Keith Bauguess) - no report

Sen. Bill Wielechowski (Nate Graham) Talked about some of the other council meeting formats (hybrid or zoom). Not much going on – elections coming up. East High pool is now open. They are using it for swim team but need lifeguards. Gas prices spiked again - \$1.62 over the

national average. Bill sent a letter to Attorney General asking him to look into this. Closures in California refineries may have contributed, but actual costs here are irrelevant to that. Refining margins are high in Alaska and many constituents have asked about it.

Sen. Tom Begich (Trevor Bailly) - Early voting starts October 24<sup>th</sup>. Polling places have changed. Opioid Remediation is one of the committees Tom is working on. He leaves office in January and the report on what to do with any funds will be available then. \$58 million total is the amount of the grant. They consider setting up a trust for spending the funds. Tom is also on the Suicide Prevention council.

Rep. Geran Tarr API is more of a long term facility, which is why the Assembly is tasked with the local homeless population. There are continuing education budget discussions regarding timing of funding – for example March 15 rather than the pink slips going out in May for ASD. ISER, if engaged to do the study will take an estimated 3 years for the results. Low reading scores lead to less enthusiasm for additional funding. 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Restorative Justice summit coming up December 1 – 2. Poverty and Opportunity task force recommendations to continue to meet.

Rep. Ivy Spohnholz - PFD management had not adhered to its managing document (in regard to firing of CEO). Devon Mitchell is the new hire. There is discussion of PFD board being confirmed by the legislators. UMED issues AMATS transportation study – looking for feedback from surrounding community. <https://www.destinationumedstudy.com/>

UACC homeless shelter being proposed on Tudor Road. Lindsey said that NeighborWorks Alaska has "Supportive Housing" program, where we help connect folks to housing all across Anchorage. <https://www.nwalaska.org/permanent-supportive-housing>

Rep. Andy Josephson (Tristan Walsh) – no report

#### 4. Assembly report (3 minutes each)

Pete Petersen – Appointment approvals included: Parks & Rec Michael Brandon; and head of OMB Courtney Peterson. Discussions about Golden Lion Hotel usage for homeless housing – not emergency, but semi-permanent. Whether its treatment or housing, it needs to be used. It is sitting empty. 85 rooms that already have bathrooms and some even have kitchenettes. May be able to house more than one person per room. Would provide shelter during the winter. Sullivan Arena is at or near capacity. Camps cannot be abated unless there is somewhere for people to go. 55 rooms in Alex Hotel in Spenard were also approved. 200 people are already housed in Aviator Hotel that will extend for awhile, but they want to remodel.

Forrest Dunbar – Is the Co-chair of budget committee – 1<sup>st</sup> meeting tomorrow. Mayor has given his proposed budget - \$583 million that they are starting to look through. Mobile Crisis team absorbed into APD. There will be enough revenue from alcohol that the Mobile Crisis team should be able to stay intact. No bonds for parks in East Anchorage. Funding for RJSP still unsure. Steve Rafuse has been active in trying to move forward with RJSP Master Plan. Forrest spoke to Robin Ward, who was property management (re: Golden Lion Hotel) said this building could be occupied relatively quickly. APD towing department received \$300,000. Beetle kill mitigation \$1,000,000. Fuel costs for various agencies and put money toward Sullivan Arena repairs. Polynesian Association of AK and Pacific Community of AK received ARPA #2 distribution after accidentally being overlooked in the earlier process.

Daniel Volland - Put forward a long range transportation plan in Anchorage, run through Municipal planning. Would include snow removal and right of way management. Documenting our values so we are ready for implementation. Opioid Remediation – settlement funds that come to Anchorage have pretty broad latitude – community needs assessment of the desired use of those funds. We don't have enough treatment centers in Anchorage, although we have a problem. Mental Health, Domestic Violence and Child abuse are other problems that arise or run in conjunction with the opioid problem. There was a question about expansion of API (capacity for 85). Staffing is an issue that limits capacity. Mental Health Trust is studying expansion. There was a discussion of the problem of looking at the homeless population from different viewpoints which creates some of delay of taking action. Guest House has capacity for 130, that are on a lease with ELI – extremely low income. 20 are for those with a higher income. Don't forget to celebrate what we do have. Downtown and Fairview CC have both signed letters in support of helping the homeless.

Dan Wright talked about the homeless camps and the benefit of having a place that is safe and can get people the help they need. It also allows Fire Department personnel to not return over and over to the same locations/people. The homeless are already all over Anchorage.

Kathleen asked about AHFC funding. Ed said one problem with the rental assistance program that prices out others from renting. Anchorage needs to build some 4-5 story apartment for low income housing (perhaps where Northway Mall currently sits). Converting vacant spaces to housing, as the Anchorage housing market is very tight.

Ted appreciates Assembly efforts. Desire to make Anchorage more bicycle and pedestrian safe. Changing parking lot requirements for businesses would also help. Assembly members are looking at reducing minimum parking requirements with the planning department.

5. School board report (3 minutes each) – Kelly Lessens – liaison to Student Community Board. Working on putting together birthday packages for other students in need. 2023-2024 budget \$68 million shortfall – they must submit a balanced budget, considering cost/benefit of each program. Immersion programs, shifting 6-8 for middle school students, night program restructuring, sport programs, ASD virtual are all items being considered to help balance the budget. Many positions remain unfilled in the ASD. Overview of April 2023 bond for \$37 million. East High improvements – ADA accessibility, sprinkler and more information will be provided on the bond. Recommendation for school closures (lack of funding, inflation and lack of enrollment are the catalyst for this discussion). Combining under-utilized schools will help with collaboration between teachers and students. Reports for progress for reading – including what constitutes proficiency are coming up. 1<sup>st</sup> graders made sizeable improvements.

Kathleen asked if they are looking at all the different school programs, for example People to Teacher Ratio (PTR)? Tutoring can get accelerated growth.

Link for school board updates [asdk12.org/fy24](https://asdk12.org/fy24)

6. FCC report – Kathleen Plunkett reported that there is an issue with using the internet or the phones if we switch to using a school. Diane Holmes from Rabbit Creek CC concerned about assessor dwelling unit ordinance through MOA.

7. Report from JBER Public Affairs – no report

8. Community Car Wash Project presentation - Tanner Brandt – postponed to November 9<sup>th</sup>.

9. Alaska Trails presentation on bike trails - Carl Battreal provided a presentation on the proposed Mountain Bike trail system for the Northern portion of Russian Jack Springs Park, which is intended to be used by beginner and intermediate mountain bikers. They have received a Challenge Grant and working on fundraising. A trail design was done in 2018 about 1.5 miles, but that length of a trail would most likely not be utilized. To make the trail appealing to youth it should be accessible from the paved paths. What is lacking in the city is a progressive style system that starts easy and gets progressively more difficult. Carl is also a Nordic ski coach, so he doesn't anticipate the trails interfering with skiers. They would take advantage of trails already in use by others.

Difference in Mountain bike is a narrower pass, rolling trails that make it more interesting. Estimated budget for this project is \$221,000 for 2.5 miles of trail. Would like to see this built next summer. YEP will be helping. Machine work on the roots will be the more expensive portion.

Sherry Wright asked if any of the current cross country ski trails are going to become mountain bike trails in that portion of the park? It is the area where the tunnel under DeBarr and between the paved trail section, utilizing some of the smaller trails within that section of the park, that would cross back and forth on the wider ski trails. There are many various user groups in the park and having more people using the trails does make it safer for everyone.

Ted – believes we can all enjoy using the park.

Lindsey – loves the idea of reaching out to the nearby schools or offering programming to get students out there. Bike Anchorage's GRIT program brings middle schoolers from Begich into RJSP each spring too. Would love to expose Mighty Bikes to Russian Jack area.

Ed said he wasn't sure about the skate park, but it runs smoothly.

Lori mentioned about the immigrant population is looking at different outdoor opportunities and ways for bike borrowing, multi-lingual information. Parks & Rec signage could be made multi-lingual. QR codes can be used to integrate language without the expense of adding a host of languages on every sign.

Kathleen Plunkett makes a motion to support the single-track mountain bike trails in RJSP north east section designated in the master plan. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed Leach. Passed 10 for, 0 against, 1 abstained due to lack of a clear idea where the trails will run.

10. Neighborhood/Community Announcements - Lindsey talked about the Community Gardens and continuing work on a Russian Jack community garden. Box tops for Wonder Park can be dropped off.

Genevieve Mina – running for Geran Tarr’s seat – west of Pine Street HD 19.  
alaskansforgenevieve.com 907-230-0411

Keelin Braughman – Mountain View Library! Storytime is every Tuesday at 6pm, join us for songs, games, and great books. Tomorrow, the 13th, an artist from the Anchorage Museum will be leading a Zine making class for all ages, 3pm. Finally for some spooky Halloween events: on the 21st, we will be hosting a kid-friendly movie afternoon at 3pm. On the 28th at 5pm, join us for a Trick or Treat and Read storytime for preschoolers, come in costume, enjoy some scary good books and get some special treats. On the 29th all day long, if you come to the library in costume, you can win an award and pick up some candy and treats. Feel free to call or email if you have any question or want to know more, keelin.baughman@anchorageak.gov or 343-2904.

Ted – Running for HD22. Education, infrastructure, safe community are three things he is running on. <https://tedforalaska.com> 907.215-0312

Kendra – CIP draft list review again November agenda to vote in December. Nominations will be in November, finalized in December.

Andrew Gray running for HD 20.

Lori Pickett has the Russian Jack planting party shirts available for anyone that would like one.

Next meeting is scheduled for November 9 at 6:30 pm.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm

Minutes respectfully submitted by:  
Sherry Wright, Secretary



**Municipality of Anchorage, Alaska**  
**Parks & Recreation Commission**

632 W. 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 630  
P.O. Box 196650  
Anchorage, AK 99519



**PRC RES NO. 2023-02**  
**RUSSIAN JACK SPRINGS PARK SINGLETRACK TRAILS**

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission serves in an advisory capacity to both the Mayor and the Assembly; and

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission has the responsibility and duty to provide for the long-term vision of our park system by ensuring that a balance of parks, natural resources, and recreation facilities provides for the health, welfare, and safety of all residents of the Anchorage Bowl; and

WHEREAS, Russian Jack Springs Park is a 324-acre Special Use park that serves the year-round recreation needs of nearby residents and the Anchorage community at large; and

WHEREAS, the *Russian Jack Springs Park Master Plan* was approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission in 2022 and recommends the development of new singletrack trails in north Russian Jack Springs Park in the area formerly used as a Girls Scouts day camp; and

WHEREAS, Alaska Trails, in partnership with Anchorage Parks and Recreation proposes to plan, fund, design, construct and maintain 3.1 miles of singletrack mountain bike trails in north Russian Jack Springs Park; and

WHEREAS, the proposed singletrack trail system will provide beginner and intermediate trails as well as skill-building features for mountain bikers, will include wayfinding and signage, is designed to minimize impacts to the natural environment and wildlife, and will be compatible with the existing Nordic ski trails in north Russian Jack Springs Park; and

WHEREAS, the location of singletrack trails in north Russian Jack Springs Park balances the community's desire for new trails with the preservation of sensitive natural areas in south Russian Jack Springs Park, and will use existing social trails where possible; and

WHEREAS, singletrack trails will bring a popular type of recreation to East Anchorage, making mountain biking more accessible to youth and thousands of nearby residents; and

WHEREAS, the proposed improvements were presented to the Northeast, Russian Jack, University Area and Airport Heights Community Councils and have received numerous community council resolutions and letters of support from user groups and state legislators; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission approves the proposal for Singletrack Trails at Russian Jack Springs Park as submitted by the Parks and Recreation Department.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission this 9th day of February, 2023.

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Chair  
Parks and Recreation Commission

ATTEST:

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Mike Braniff, Director  
Parks & Recreation Department