



**MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE  
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION**



**MINUTES OF THE  
REGULAR MEETING**

**May 9, 2024**

The May 9, 2024 meeting was held in person at the Mann Leiser Memorial Greenhouse.

**CALL TO ORDER**

The May 9, 2024, regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission was called to order by Chair Brian Looney at **6:30 p.m.**

**ROLL CALL**

Commissioners present:

- Commissioner Edwin Blair
- Commissioner Bruce Graham
- Commissioner Brian Looney
- Commissioner Andrew Kastning
- Commissioner Mary Vollendorf

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

Staff present:

- Taylor Keegan
- Mike Braniff
- Tanya Hickok
- Emily Kokotan
- Brad Muir
- Ellen Devine

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Upon motion duly made by **Commissioner Vollendorf** and seconded by **Commissioner Graham**, the Agenda for the May 9, 2024, meeting was unanimously approved.

## APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Upon motion duly made by **Commissioner Graham** and seconded by **Commissioner Vollendorf**, the Minutes of the April 11, 2024, meeting was unanimously approved.

## DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

Mike Braniff, Parks and Recreation Director passed the Director's Comments section to Taylor Keegan, Parks Superintendent

1. **New Safety Coordinator:** Brandon Hayworth recently joined as our safety coordinator. He has extensive experience with OSHA and we are excited to have him on board.
2. **General Foreman:** Stephan Stonerock has taken on the general foreman position which oversees our maintenance, horticulture, and healthy spaces crews.
3. **Recreation:** Bike Rodeo is happening this weekend at Chanshtnu Muldoon Park, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Anchorage Mayor's Marathon is happening this June, at the end of May our Centennial Campground is opening for the season.
4. **Challenge Grant and Forestry Grant:** The celebration is taking place with Anchorage Parks Foundation next week to celebrate the recipients.

Mike Braniff, Parks and Recreation Director, followed up with the following comments:

1. **Horticulture:** Annual flowers will be heading out the door and you can expect to see things coming back to life starting on May 20.
2. **Archive Site Next to Cuddy:** Currently the Healthy Spaces crew is at about 90% cleaned. A lot of cars have been removed and we estimate 150 people spent 180 days there.
3. **Recreation Centers and Aquatics:** Experiencing a challenging labor market which is part of the reason why we have centers closed on the weekend.

## ANCHORAGE PARK FOUNDATION

There were no staff present from the Anchorage Park Foundation

## NON-AGENDA APPEARANCE REQUESTS

There were no non-agenda appearance requests.

## ACTION ITEM

**PRC 24-02: PRC 24-02 Jodhpur Bluff Bank Stabilization**  
**PRC Resolution 2024-02**  
Presented by Tanya Hickok

Commissioners, accompanied by engineering staff, conducted an on-site visit at Jodhpur Bluff for a presentation on the Jodhpur Bluff Bank Stabilization project prior to the PRC meeting on May 9.

Tanya Hickok, Anchorage Parks and Recreation Park Planner, presented a recap of the on-site meeting to help provide additional context for Commissioner Graham who was not able to join for the on-site meeting. The team met with geotechnical and civil engineers on-site to give a history of the site, it was a previous gravel pit and then after the '64 earthquake it was used as a dump for thousands of vehicles that are now buried inside the bluff. We then met with Sue from ADF&G to discuss the history of the bluff. In 2015, they tried to remove several of the vehicles. This project is not just about protecting the bluff, but also about protecting the refuge at the base of the bluff.

This project is continuing to move forward with the hope to have it bid out for construction this season.

### **Commissioner Questions/Comments**

Commissioner Kastning: How does the drainage pond at Jodhpur Bluff currently work?

The pond does not seep or percolate out. Instead, it does evaporate. It currently serves as a drainage basin for 20 acres of property. It is important because we don't want all 20 acres to drain out over the bluff which would cause erosion of materials into the wildlife refuge.

Commissioner Blair: Interested in knowing the total cost and if that money could be used elsewhere.

The engineer's estimate is \$1.5M. With that said, FEMA will only pay for the total amount for this project. This project is very tied to this plan and estimated cost and the money cannot be used elsewhere.

Commissioner Graham: This pond is man-made? Do we know when? Is its sole purpose to provide water for Motocross?

It is man-made although unsure off-hand of the year. While it is used to provide water for dust prevention on the Motocross track it is also a storm-water retention for the 20-acre basin to prevent it from going over the bluff and causing erosion.

Commissioner Graham: If there is no pond then how will it go over the bluff and there is normal rainfall and snow?

Typically, drainage will find its way to the lowest spot, and then create rivulets into the bank and erode from there. Since the bluff is not a perfectly level area it will not create a sheet-flow off the side of the bluff.

Commissioner Kastning: Those FEMA dollars for long-term monitoring, need to be used by a certain time?

Yes, we need to use the FEMA money by November 30. With this funding, we are not only creating a fix but also doing hazard mitigation. The liner we are putting into the pond is meant to prevent water from infiltrating into the subsurface cracks. We are also using seed mixes to help stabilize the bank.

**Public Testimony from Sue Rodman ADF&G**

The Anchorage Coastal Wildlife refuge is one of 32 refuges and I have worked on this project for the past year. All questions have been adequately addressed. The wildlife refuge has a variety of users including bird watchers, skiers, and dog-walkers. So, there is a safety aspect to stabilizing the bluff for the users below. Right now, we are looking at how your soil from bluff is coming into our wildlife refuge. The proposed project addresses not just the safety concerns for the user groups but also the safety for wildlife and migratory birds.

Upon motion made by **Commissioner Vollendorf**, seconded by **Commissioner Kastning** and voted for approval by the majority of the group the resolution was passed.

**PRC 24-04: PRC 24-04 Town Square Park Lighting Improvements  
PRC Resolution 2024-04**  
Presented by Tanya Hickok

Tanya Hickok, Anchorage Parks and Recreation Park Planner, presented the proposed Town Square Park Lighting Improvements that came from the Town Square Park Master Plan. After meeting with the downtown Community Council, the group was excited about the prospect of new lighting because of the increased safety provided by lighting. RSA engineers did the lighting plan which included under bench, pedestrian lighting, flood lighting, and string lighting.

The entire plan would cost roughly \$700K. So, we are looking at adding lighting in phases, the first phase would include bollard lighting, pedestrian lighting, and flood lighting which would cost about \$250K and is coming from past Municipal bonds. It is not anticipated to start until 2025.

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

**PRC 24-05: PRC 24-05 Youth Employment in Parks 2024 Projects  
PRC Resolution 2024-05**  
Presented by Brad Muir and Emily Kokotan

Brad Muir, Natural Resource Manger, and Emily Kokotan, Natural Resource Specialist, presented the 2024 Youth Employment in Parks project proposals. Youth Employment in Parks is made possible by our partners, most notably the Anchorage Park

Foundation. This is the 18<sup>th</sup> season of YEP and over those years we have completed 126 different projects.

YEP is a 10-week program for 16-19-year-olds that focuses on park improvement projects, and included in the program will be 8 project weeks. For 2024, the proposed projects include

- KFQD Park: Building a bike skills loop/pump track
- Cuddy Family Midtown Park: Building a rain garden to address drainage issues.
- Hilstrand Pond Bank Restoration: Adding a elevated light penetrating platform and willows
- Spruce Bark Beetle Kill tree planting: Replanting a couple thousand spruce trees to replace trees that have been removed
- Ship Creek Bank Restoration: Stabilize the banks with a variety of plants.
- Government Hill: ½ mile of trail improvement from Sunset Park to Alderwood Park.

The final week of YEP is a mentorship week where we set up time to meet with professionals in fields that they are interested in.

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

## **INFORMATION ITEMS**

There were no information items.

## **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

- **Commissioner Blair:** Concerning Jodhpur Bluff, it just doesn't make sense to me and that is why I voted against it. Even though it is FEMA money, it still comes from us. It is our tax dollars and I know we can't use it for something else, but it is part of the reason why our country is in debt.

## **UPCOMING MEETING**

The next meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission is scheduled for 6:00 p.m., on Thursday, June 13, 2024, at the Spenard Community Recreation Center.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Upon motion made by **Commissioner Vollendorf** seconded by **Commissioner Looney** and unanimously approved, the meeting adjourned at **7:40 p.m.**

MINUTES APPROVED this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2024:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Brian Looney, Chair  
Parks & Recreation Commission

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mike Braniff, Director  
Parks & Recreation

