

Meeting Minutes February 10, 2021

Meadow Lakes Community Council Inc.

3 Officers required for quorum: TOTAL = YES

Y Pres: Patricia Fisher Y Vice Pres: Linda Conover

N Treasurer: Andrea Scott Y Sec: Camden Yehle

Y Council Coordinator: Tim Swezey

13 Members of the Meadow Lakes Community required for quorum: YES

32 Total Attendees

Meeting Quorum = Yes

VIRTUAL MEETING CONDUCTED ON ZOOM.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:01 pm by President Patti Fisher.

Pledge of Allegiance: Recited.

Quorum: Determination of quorum was made by the Membership Committee.

Consent Agenda: Members attending the meeting voted to approve the Consent Agenda.

Board Reports:

- **Treasurer:**

- **President:** Patti shared a plan from State DOT to add signage at the intersection of the Parks Highway and Meadow Lakes Loop which seeks to alleviate the problems at that dangerous crossing.

Announcement: Jacqueline Kenshalo, Customer Relations, Matanuska Telephone Association, reported on the availability of student scholarships offered by MTA.

Presentation 1: "Activities at the Mat-Su Borough," Mike Brown, Borough Manager.

Mike gave a brief overview of his work at the Borough, then the meeting was opened up for questions.

A question asked about cost cutting ideas presented in the manager's report of January 27. One of the items is the proposed reductions at Borough Transfer sites. Mike reported that the reductions were for discussion and not suggested changes at this time. The Manager will not propose closures or reduction of hours for trash transfer sites. Sherry added that private haulers in the area cannot pick up large items and residents still need access to landfills.

Staff is reviewing healthcare costs in the Borough budget. Capital improvements are a large part of the budget, and the Borough has only limited capacity to improve roads.

When asked if there are any new taxes under discussion, Mike reported that there are options on the table, but it is a discussion at this point. It is not possible to cut ourself out of the financial situation. There was a presentation in January about this and excise taxes had more interest. There is concern about overlapping taxes for sales tax and raising property taxes is a

Meeting Minutes February 10, 2021

considered for gravel extraction.

We began talking details with the Borough's Community Development Department, and we moved into a discussion of possibly acquiring the 40 acres south of our existing park. As it developed the Borough offered to give us the 40 acres for a nominal dollar amount, if we were to agree to accept that the remaining 80 acres of the parcel be mined for gravel. In other words - a trade off.

Given the difficult financial situation in which the State and Borough find themselves, it should be said that the gravel extraction could bring about 12 million in revenue to the Borough. It appears that there is a possibility that the Assembly would approve a contract with a gravel company if not this year, then next. So, it becomes a bit of a gamble. Do we protect what we can and take title to 40 acres, or turn down the offer, oppose the mining Conditional Use Permit, and run the risk of not obtaining any land?

A couple of specific points:

1) There has been concern with mining being a very unpleasant activity, particularly to those residential areas to the West, near Rainbow Lake, along Scatters. Just to be clear, the area being discussed currently is not directly adjacent to those residences in the Rainbow Lake Area. That land has already been mined.

2) Meadow Lakes has very little in the way of Park/Recreations lands or trails. Our Community Park is one of a kind between Wasilla and Willow. It has been a goal of the Council to support development of recreational facilities whenever possible.

3) Meadow Lakes Seniors has a very large investment in the housing facility at the northwest corner of our existing property. The housing would be very close to any new mining activity. ML Seniors are very anxious about protecting their property and the quiet, dust-free environment that they currently enjoy. It is also important to protect the residents on Barbi and Kim.

In truth, it would be wonderful if we could obtain all of the 120 acres. However, that may not be possible. The next step in this process will be continued discussion with the Borough to pin down our requirements in any CUP with a gravel company. The Board will then come back to you for a vote on this proposed acquisition. You have the final vote.

In the discussions with the Borough to date, we have asked for a number of specific requirements to protect the acreage and the surrounding area:

- No mining traffic to and from the North edge of the property.*
- A Conservation Easement of the Poor Soils Triangle area on the western edge of the MLS property, with easement provision for future extension of Barbi. A Conservation Easement of 200 feet along the western boundary of existing MLCC property.*
- Obtain all 40 acres of SE quadrant to preserve open space for public use and MAT+SAR certification.*
- The contract must require that the mining company be held to Borough Code on Reclamation*

Meeting Minutes February 10, 2021

- *Processing equipment shall be restricted to the lower 1/3 of parcel with the establishment of noise berms around processing equipment sufficient to protect residences to the north.*
- *Strict enforcement of water table separation requirement.*
- *Future use of the mined acres to be designated for a School site and Community use.*

Our plan for the 40 acres, if we were to obtain it, is to build a number of trails including an equestrian trail, nature trails, ski trail and fenced dog park, and space for MAT+SAR train, which requires 40 acres.

The next steps would be to work with the Borough and come back to the Community Council.”

The following questions were posed:

What is the difference between the sale price and the royalty? Usually the Borough leases the land to a gravel company who mines. They pay a fee per cubic yard to the Borough as a royalty. The royalty is set in the contract with the company. Would it be paid as an estimate or actually weighed? In this case it would probably be weighed on a scale.

Is there a reclamation plan for the existing gravel mines in the area? It looks like the sites adjoining the Borough acres were over mined and not reclaimed. Emerson responded that in early 2000's the Borough adopted new regulations, but existing sites were grandfathered. The newer regulations have many more stipulations.

Does that mean there will never be a reclamation plan for the existing gravel pits? The corporations want the land to be worth something when they are done so they can sell it. At some point they would need to reclaim the area in order to sell it.

Does the state have additional regulations? Alex Strawn responded that the current mines are under the grandfathered regulations and there are no reclamation requirements.

How would you enforce reclamation on a new mine? Usually it is citations, warnings, and taking companies to court. Eric Phillips, MSB Community Services Director, added the requirements will be part of the contract.

Why can't there be a hard deadline to start reclamation? There could be performance standards included that would prevent the mining taking many years.

Why do they need this site when there is a large site to the north? The pit in Meadow Lakes is meant more for local projects.

A question was asked about bids on the site where there was no access. Emerson reported that there was access to the site under discussion. *Would the Borough be able to contract with a mining company if the company did not have physical access to the acreage?* Yes, but makes it more expensive for the company.

How long will it take to mine? This difficult to estimate.

Meeting Minutes February 10, 2021

From Pittman to N. Suzanna there are vacated easements. *Will those become public use easements when the mines are reclaimed?* The easements could be dedicated by the private land owner.

Is it safe to assume the Borough will not sell the land in question to the gravel company? A lease or a gravel extraction contract is being considered, but not selling it.

1 to 4 million tons of gravel moved out of the Borough every year.

3.5 million tons approximately at this site. 10 to 15 years is a reasonable timeframe.

Sherri: Concerned about the senior housing, especially dust and noise. She wants the Borough to consider including more land to be protected on the north edge of the parcel near the housing.

Kim: We need more trails in this area. The totality of the area makes it seem like this land will be added to the existing mine. Would like to stipulate reclamation on the current mines. *Can we invite the companies to see the MLCC facilities?*

Ariel: There is not much public land available in Meadow Lakes, most is private. The proposed land acquisition could provide a good way to connect existing trails.

Linda: There isn't much public land left in the large Meadow Lakes area. We will need a school site in the future and reclamation will be critical.

Correspondence: The correspondence links were presented on Facebook.

Old/New business: None

Agency Reports:

Alex Strawn: Introduced Mike Johnson who is the new code enforcement officer in this area. He drives a white marked pickup, number 4. His contact number is 907-795-6472.

Senator Wilson: The legislative session has resumed in Juneau. The Senate is organized, but the House is not yet. He supports full school bond dept reimbursement. It has been vetoed by the Governor in the past. There are major road resurfacing projects coming up as well as the Parks Highway Phase 3. The capitol is still closed to the public and open online. There is a bill to continue allowing boards and commissions to meet electronically.

Assembly Tam Boeve: Property tax assessment notices were mailed. Most residential assessments went up about 7%. This was caused by a strong housing market and increase in cost of building materials. The assembly voted against putting the Strong Mayor and First Class borough issues on the November ballot. The Borough is considering additional regulations for smaller marijuana facilities and changes to alcohol licensing process.

Meeting Minutes February 10, 2021

The question was asked: *Is there a regulation about how many marijuana facilities can be in a certain area?* Not at this time.

West Lakes Fire, Tawnya Hightower: The District had 51 emergency calls. One was a structure fire in our area. It was one too many. West Lakes acquired a new (used) arial truck from Fairbanks. Many fires are started by downed powerlines. MEA will remove trees from private property without charge if request by the owner.

Persons to Be Heard: limited to 3 minutes per person
No persons requested to be heard.

Next Meeting: Location to be determined, March 10, 2021, 7pm

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:56 pm by President Fisher.

Patricia Fisher, President Date

Camden Yehle, Secretary Date