

# Meeting Minutes July 11, 2018

## Meadow Lakes Community Council Inc.

❖ 3 Officers required for quorum: TOTAL =3 YES ❖

Pres: Patricia Fisher ❖  Vice Pres: Linda Conover  
 Treasurer: Cindy Michaelson ❖  Sec: Janet Henkel  
 Council Coordinator: Camden Yehle

❖ 3 Committee Chairs required for quorum: TOTAL = 4 YES ❖

Education: Cally Leader ❖  CIP: Tim Swezey  
 Bylaw: Terry Boyle ❖  Mem: Lacy Harris  
 Trail: Lori Benner-Hanson ❖  Safety: Larry Michaelson  
 Gaming: Ariel Cannon

❖ 10 Members of the Meadow Lakes Community required for quorum: TOTAL = 18 YES ❖

Meeting Quorum = YES

1. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm by President Patti Fisher. It was determined that a quorum was present.
  - 1a. **Pledge of Allegiance:** Recited.
2. **Approval of:**
  - a. **Agenda** – Jan Henkel motioned to approve the agenda and was seconded by Lacey Harris. There was no discussion and the vote was unanimous in favor.
  - b. **Minutes** – Julie Starr motioned to approve the May minutes, and was seconded by Richard Nevins. There was no discussion and the vote was unanimous in favor. Linda Conover motioned to approve the June minutes, and was seconded by Lacey Harris. There was no discussion and the vote was unanimous in favor.
  - c. **Treasurers Report** – Patti Fisher presented the treasurers report.
3. **Reports:**

**President** – Patti Fisher spoke briefly about the Stand for Salmon initiative, which will be on our upcoming ballot. She will pass on the dates for some of the upcoming forums as soon as she is made aware of them. There is also a road bond ordinance which will come before the borough on August 17<sup>th</sup>, with a vote on August 31<sup>st</sup>. Patti is hoping that Beverly Lakes Road will be on this ordinance.

**Gaming** – Nothing to report.

**Parks & Rec** – Nothing to report.

**CIP** – Nothing to report.

**Education** – Nothing to report.

**Membership** – Nothing to report.

**Bylaws** – Nothing to report.

**Council Coordinator** – Nothing to report.
4. **Presentation:** Captain Anthony April, Palmer Detachment Commander of the Alaska State Troopers, gave a presentation about the shortage of troopers in our area. He began his presentation by asking members if they knew how many troopers we had staffing the Meadow Lakes area. There were no correct replies to his question. Capt. April said that there are four shifts, and each full shift constitutes 9 troopers plus a Sargent. These troopers police an area roughly the size of West Virginia, and the shift runs from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm. Capt. April stressed that troopers do care about adequate response times, however calls are prioritized and they are understaffed. He stated that the trooper involved in the shooting in Copper Center was on the ground by himself for over an hour, waiting for other troopers to respond from Tok, Palmer, etc. Whenever there is a death investigation multiple troopers are required to be sent to the scene, not just one. Calls don't stop coming in during these times, and as a result additional troopers must be called in who are trying to have a day off. Troopers are currently working 12 hours per day, 7 days a week, which is one of the reasons we have a hard time retaining troopers.

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Captain April knows that we are frustrated, and wants us to know that he is also frustrated, as are all of the other troopers. In the last 7 days alone they have had 60+ thefts, including cars. He encouraged members to talk to their communities, their legislators, and start a neighborhood watch program. Troopers need our help, as they cannot possibly do everything on their own.

Andy Murr asked how many of the 38 trooper positions that have been funded but not hired, would go to the valley. Capt. April said we currently have 36 – 40+ vacancies statewide; however the answer to that question lies with the state. 80% of the troopers currently hired have less than 5 years with the AST.

Another member asked if troopers had the authority to partner with citizens to assist, and secondly, the authority to hire help with phones, administrative tasks, etc. Capt. April said that there is currently a vacancy for an administrative assistant, and there is a citizen academy with citizen alumni and troopers do try and partner with these individuals. He feels that civil area patrols become a challenge, as patrols sometimes decide to take matters into their own hands if troopers are slow or unable to respond, creating a civil liability.

When asked what one single thing would be most beneficial in filling the vacant positions, Capt. April replied that benefits are the number one item needed. While recruiting is the troopers main focus right now, retention is equally, if not more important.

Chad Scott asked about new troopers who have just completed the Juneau academy, and was told that 3 new troopers started on July 10<sup>th</sup> and the next class will begin in August. Hopefully we will see some of them come here when they have completed the academy.

Representative Mark Neumann stated that the legislature has been trying to address this issue for year. He said that the Governor did ask for an increase in the trooper's budget this year; however it was for additional troopers, not benefits. Troopers here still don't have the retirement and benefits that are available to troopers in other states. Alaska State Troopers are a special breed, and the job that they do encompasses a huge territory, with and without roads, and they still get to people – whether it's on a dogsled, a snow machine, car, etc.

Kelly Langford asked if the Mat-Su Borough, and in particular, the Meadow Lakes area, is the meth capital of the state. She asked for suggestions to reduce the use of addictive drugs, which in turn, causes crime. Capt. April said that we are all aware of the epidemic of opioids and meth, which is a nationwide problem. Law enforcement alone cannot fix this problem, we need everyone to come together to deal with this.

Patti Fisher asked how a call reporting a suspected drug house was investigated, as Capt. April spends a considerable amount of time with the drug unit as well as his own unit. He replied that drug offenses have to be federal offenses. These individuals must be tied to ATF and DEA, so that they are able to identify them and get them off of the streets. The drug unit is also extremely understaffed. When asked if troopers had the authority to arrest these individuals, he replied that the best way to get them put back into jail is to arrest them on a probation violation. If their probation is revoked they will be sent back to jail to serve the remainder of their term. In order to arrest them, a search warrant must be obtained, using all of the information available. One member asked why property couldn't be seized when it is being used as a drug house, to which Capt. April replied that government officials have a tendency to target assets which then turn up at auction, even though they may not be directly tied to drug activity.

MSB Mayor, Vern Halter, asked roughly how much it cost to train, hire and outfit a trooper. Capt. April replied that by the time they are hired, background checked, and outfitted with uniforms, a car, etc., the investment into each trooper is roughly \$160,000. When asked if there were any metrics breaking down the \$160,000 investment to show that retainage would actually save money, Capt. April stated that they are currently trying to implement a ride along program to vetted individuals. This would provide them the opportunity to experience the job before actually hiring them and continuing to invest in them. Mayor Halter also expressed concern about the troopers and the brown shirts being centralized, to which Capt. April replied that the Wildlife troopers have their own command.

Patti thanked Capt. April for his time and presentation, and he was given a standing ovation by members.

## 6. **Correspondence:** Correspondence links were listed on the agenda.

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The marijuana control board has set up the renewals to all be held on the 30<sup>th</sup> of August. The state is the only agency that has the authority to rescind a license at this time. You may submit comments, but control ultimately rests with the control board.

7. **Old Business:** The MLCC asked the board to draw up a resolution to be passed on to the DOT regarding Phase III of the Parks Highway Project. Please review the enclosed draft and let us know what changes you would like to see made. One of the main things that came up for discussion was the hope for more frontage roads. Representative Neumann stated that he has been working on this for several years, and while DOT's design of breaking the highway every half mile or so may work in the lower 48, it doesn't work well here. DOT has not spoken with any of the local business people who are being affected by the highway upgrade. This is usually the case, as these people are forced to work with a real estate appraiser who acts as go between for DOT and the individual or business involved in the property take. Contracts are coming in at approximately 20% under budget, so there is money available to take care of these people. Any Murr asked Representative Neumann what type of influence, if any, he had over these projects, as he feels this is not the first project that has been poorly regulated. Representative Neumann replied that the legislature funds the project and the administration then takes over and drives the bus. Chad Scott pointed out that the accountability of the Governor and the appointed commissioner can make a difference.

Neil Ainsworth, an attorney representing 9 different individuals involved in this project, stated that the DOT will tell you that if you don't like their offer that is too bad – they will condemn your property. This is a serious problem and needs to be dealt with. This area is only going to keep growing, as Anchorage is land locked and more people and businesses are moving out here from Anchorage. The money for this project is there and it's available.

Julie Starr motioned to accept the resolution as it is written, with a second from Sherri Rusher. There was no further discussion. A vote was held with 3 opposed and the remainder in favor. The resolution passes as written.

8. **New Business:** None

9. **Reports:** Fire Chief John Fairchild expressed concern about not having adequate frontage roads, as it makes it difficult to gain access to many properties without them. There have been quite a lot of small issues over the past month; however experience has shown that small issues often turn into larger issues. Please be careful with the small stuff – we don't want any large issues. Be careful out there and watch out for each other. Big Lake was a full house over the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. All of our units have Opticoms on them, which are supposed to change the stoplights to green, allowing us to go through when we are on a call. The Opticom is not working at the Parks/Pittman intersection at this time. Thank you volunteers, and feel free to find me at Station 73 during the day.

10. **Persons to be heard:** Assemblyman Randall Kowalke said that he ranted last month about DOT; however nothing much has changed there. The road bond package does have Beverly Lakes Road on it and it will be introduced. The challenge will be to get enough support to get it on the ballot. He is expecting it to move forward, but is not sure exactly what will be on the final bond. Items such as this which are moving forward for voter approval will be above and beyond your tax cap. They are currently looking for more funding to match this with. Patti Fisher said that an email with reminder dates will be sent out on this matter.

MSB Mayor Vern Halter said that we need to get the salmon through a corridor back to the Mat-Su Borough. The borough is currently trying to move the LNG deal to Pt. McKenzie, rather than to Nikiski. This would create 15,000 jobs to create the gas line, and 2,000 permanent jobs. If this moves to Pt. McKenzie, this will change our tax structure immensely, as 85 – 90% of our borough budget is currently made up of property taxes. The assembly did a wonderful job on the property tax cap. Thank you to Representative Mark Neumann for his letter on the fish and game officers – it was a great letter. Mayor Halter is definitely in support of obtaining and retaining more troopers. He also feels that we need more trooper stations so that troopers are much more visible and able to respond to their calls much quicker. Phase III of the Parks Highway project definitely needs a continuous frontage road, and he will send a letter out to the borough and see if we can lobby to get these frontage roads put in.

Dan the Fireplace Man is upset about the plat that the state used for the take on his property for the Parks Highway Phase III project. The plats were completed by three different surveyors with three different results. The loss of his property to the project will affect the ability of trucks to turn around, etc. and he will be unable to grow his business with the loss of 10% of his property. There has been no offer by the state for his loss of property.

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Any Murr is a retired principal and teacher who will be running against Representative Mark Neumann in the upcoming primary. A meet and greet will be held at Floaters in Big Lake on Friday from 3 – 6 pm.

Candy Murr has a petition that she would like to pass around which allows persons to come in to vote for state and local issues at the same time. This would increase voter turnout as well as save money and time. 2000 signatures are needed; however they would like to gather 3000 signatures to account for those signatures that will be thrown out. If you signed up for a dividend this year, you were automatically registered to vote, so please sign the petition. She also expressed concern about with small children and other persons crossing the roads without a crosswalk to help them, especially in the area of roundabouts.

Jasmine Martin works for Senator David Wilson, who wishes he were able to be here. If you wish to speak with the Senator, please take a business card from her, call her, and she make sure that you are able to set up a meeting with him. Next month Senator Wilson will be here for the meeting. Jasmine and Jodi Simpson drove the Parks Highway project to try and see the issues that people are concerned about, as this is on their list of interests. Not every small community has the problems that the Meadow Lakes area does. Crime has hit the Meadow Lakes area hard, and they are aware of this. Please come up and get a card after the meeting so that we can set up a personal meeting with the Senator.

Representative Mark Neumann introduced Senator Mike Shower, who replaced Mike Dunleavy. At a previous meeting we had several representatives of government agencies when we discussed SB91. At one of these meeting Trooper Doug Massie was here. All of these troopers are scheduled to be transferred out of their current posts and moved to a centralized location in Palmer. Wildlife is located outside of the cities, especially north Wasilla. It makes no sense to move these Wildlife troopers into Palmer, and this will make their response times much greater.

## 11. Approve Meeting Location:

Birch Creek Villas Senior Housing  
1210 N. Kim Drive  
Meadow Lakes

Wednesday, August 8, 2018  
Sign In: 6PM to 7PM  
Meeting: 7PM – 9PM

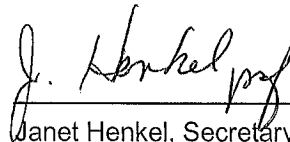
Julie Starr moved to approve the August meeting location and was seconded by Lacey Harris. There was no discussion and the vote was unanimous in favor.

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



Patricia Fisher, President

Date



Janet Henkel, Secretary

Date