

Meeting Minutes February 14, 2018

Meadow Lakes Community Council Inc.

❖ 3 Officers required for quorum: TOTAL = 4 YES ❖ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pres: Patricia Fisher ❖ <input type="checkbox"/> Vice Pres: Rae Arno <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Treasurer: Cindy Michaelson ❖ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sec: Janet Henkel <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Council Coordinator: Tim Swezey	❖ 3 Committee Chairs required for quorum: TOTAL = 7 YES ❖ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education: Cally Leader ❖ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CIP: Terry Boyle <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bylaw: Linda Conover ❖ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mem: Lacy Harris <input type="checkbox"/> Trail: Lori Benner-Hanson ❖ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Safety: Larry Michaelson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gaming: Ariel Cannon
❖ 10 Members of the Meadow Lakes Community required for quorum: TOTAL = 30 YES ❖ Meeting Quorum = YES	

7:00 pm - Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm by President Patti Fisher. It was determined that a quorum was present.

Pledge of Allegiance: Recited.

7:05 pm - Approval of Minutes: Cally Leader motioned to approve the November minutes, and was seconded by Cindy Michaelson. There was no discussion and the vote was unanimous in favor.

Larry Michaelson motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 pm, rather than 9:00 pm. Cindy Michaelson seconded the motion. There was no discussion and the vote was unanimous in favor.

7:10 pm – President Patti Fisher introduced tonight’s speakers: AK State Troopers Andy Gorn, Tom Dunn, and Ron Gaines; Valley Neighborhood Watch Coordinator and Crime Stoppers Secretary, Belinda Bohanen; Crime Stoppers President Eric Carlson; Mat-Su Borough District Attorney Roman Kalytiak; Mat-Su Borough Mayor Vern Halter; and Mat-Su Borough Assemblymen Randall Kowalke and Jim Sykes.

President Fisher at this time asked that any persons wanting to comment or speak to please sign up. There will be a two minute time limit. If there are only a few persons wishing to speak the time limit may be extended. This is meant to be a positive meeting, so please keep your comments on a positive note. We are hopeful that the outcome of this meeting will be a list of positive ideas which will aid our speaker in making changes, and we hope to add your comments to our list.

Trooper Gorn began his presentation by saying that the AK State Troopers are the primary law enforcement agency in Meadow Lakes, and they are doing everything that they can. The troopers are aware that there are issues with repeat offenders, and ask that you not become frustrated with the troopers when the district attorney’s office releases them. While we all wish that crime would stop tomorrow, we all know that this is not going to happen. The single best thing that you can do is to know your neighbors and communicate with each other. Lock your car doors; don’t leave guns or valuables in your cars. Don’t leave your garage door opener in your unlocked car, and don’t leave valuables, i.e.; snow machines, 4-wheelers, trailers, etc. out in your front yard, as thieves look at this as an opportunity.

Trooper Dunn stated that the troopers are 20 bodies short right now in order to maintain their workload. At any given time they are lucky to have five troopers on patrol in this area. There are currently approximately 17,000 citizens per trooper, and these figures are not meant as an excuse, but rather as a reality. Calls must be prioritized and occasionally they have to ship assets to where they are most needed. Schedules are being changed constantly in order to better serve you and keep people safe. The more citizen involvement we can get the better. The little things do help, please communicate them. Facebook community pages are helpful with names, pictures, plates, etc. The troopers can’t fix what they don’t know about. Trooper Dunn stated that he not trying to be negative, but wants to be truthful about the current situation. The troopers have set up a specific criminal suppression unit.

Lieutenant Hayes is the head of the criminal suppression unit. He reiterated what the other two troopers said, adding that if you think that there has been an increase in burglary and theft, you are correct. In 2014, there were 188 thefts, while in 2016 there were 547 thefts. In 2017 there were 530 thefts in the Mat-Su Valley. These figures do not include burglaries or vehicle thefts. There are gangs out here committing burglaries, and the Anchorage area is also seeing an increase in crime. Troopers are trying to take down the worst of the worst first, and doing their best to correct this situation while following the necessary protocols. There are currently 40 unfilled trooper positions due to budget cuts.

Lieutenant Hayes suggested that everyone inventory their big ticket items, making sure to record the serial numbers.

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Even if we know an item is stolen, we can't do anything about it if we can't connect it to a victim. Take photos of your jewelry. We can use photos when we visit the various pawn shops, etc.

Belinda Bohanen explained that Neighborhood Watch involves meeting your neighbors and watching out for each other. It also involves learning how to make your home less inviting for criminals. You are encouraged to make a phone tree for your neighborhood, keeping it small enough that it is manageable. If you see something, say something, and keep a close eye out for your elderly neighbors. Neighborhood Watch does not suggest that you ever place either yourself or your family in danger. If you own guns, please know how to use them properly.

It is also important that your address is visible from the road in case you do need troopers, ambulance or fire services. The Mat-Su Borough is now larger than Fairbanks, and the calls coming in are prioritized in order of safety. It is important that you lock all of your doors, trim your shrubbery and make sure you keep your things put away. Make an inventory of everything that you have which is of value to you, and be prepared to provide this inventory in the case of a robbery, fire, etc. Know the license plate number of your car, and don't leave an unlocked car running in the driveway. Be aware of your surrounding and take precautions.

If you have been the victim of a robbery, please remember to notify local law enforcement agencies if you leave the state. If your belongings are recovered they will need to know how to get a hold of you. We need to help the troopers help us.

Books and pamphlets are available through the Neighborhood Watch website, as well as signage. The website is: www.nn.wi

Eric Carlson urged members to team up with Crime Stoppers, as troopers would like nothing better than to be reactive rather than proactive. Stopping crime is a team effort between you, the troopers and Crime Stoppers, so when you see something suspicious – call! You can leave an anonymous tip and possibly even collect some cash, although most people call in because they care about their community rather than collecting the cash. We have to gather as a team in order to get this information out to hopefully catch these criminals and make this situation better. We do have a board of directors here in the borough, and are looking for new board members as well as new general members. The further we can branch out to share this information, the better. We have been very successful with 641 arrests, and over \$94,000 paid out in reward money over the years.

7:30 pm - District Attorney Roman Kalytiuk stated that his presentation was about the DA's role in the Valley, not SB91 or SB54. The DA's office works under the Attorney General, who works under the governor. In 2017, there were 2390 new cases, which breaks down to 265 cases per prosecutor. In 1997 there were 6 prosecutors and in 2018 there are 9 prosecutors. According to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports, Alaska is the most dangerous state in the nation. We have the highest violent crime per capita, and this is more than twice the national average.

Before SB91, it was obvious that incarceration rates were rising, and it was also obvious that crime was going down. Mr. Kalytiuk believes that everyone would agree that the police and the DA's office were doing a pretty good job through those years. This decrease in crime wasn't just happening in Alaska, but throughout the United States, and at that point it was determined that we had the largest prison population in the world.

At its core, SB91 imposes less punishment on offenders who have done the least amount of damage to the community. This strategy was a form of experiment meant to reduce recidivism. SB91 came about because it was fiscally driven. Our income streams into the state were dwindling, and people were concerned about the rate of incarceration within the state. Mr. Kalytiuk stated that he has never in his career seen such a sweeping reform, nor such change as SB91 has brought about.

While many other states front loaded the funding needed for drug treatment programs, Alaska did not, and now there is a shortage of funding for these programs. SB54 did increase some of the penalties for theft, as well as for violating conditions of release, however most misdemeanor sentences are served on electronic monitoring programs. When we look back at SB91 in the next 4-5 years, will we find we have saved money? Will we see a decrease in recidivism? Will the cost of establishing the Pretrial Services division offset any savings? Will rehabilitation and reentry programs be improved? And most of all, will public safety have been improved? It will be interesting to see how the answers to these questions play out. Stay positive, stay optimistic, and most of all – stay involved.

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7:45 pm - Mat-Su Borough Mayor Vern Halter began his presentation by thanking the troopers and the DA for their presentations, and added that since we are a second class borough we do not have inherent police powers. We could vote on adding police powers to the borough powers, or we can vote to become a first class borough, giving us police powers. Budget cuts have affected every leg of the stool in the budgeting process and although a lot of these issues are state issues, they affect us at the local level. It is also possible to establish a police service area, similar to a road service area. This will incur substantial cost, such as transportation to Palmer jails, etc. Your property taxes would be affected, as they would include an additional police mil rate. Don't let the state off the hook – they are trying to push these things down to the local level, rather than dealing with them at the state level. We need to put people in Juneau who will make some of these things a priority and fund them accordingly. I was a previous public defender, and we always felt that the DA's office was overstaffed, however I now know that they were not, as the Mat-Su Borough is the size of the state of West Virginia.

Borough Assemblyman Randall Kowalke also thanked the prosecutor and the troopers. He represents District 7, which covers an area equaling 18,500 miles. Assemblyman Kowalke feels that SB91 is a train wreck which was never funded properly, and SB54 is a poorly placed bandage. He also feels that the court system needs a serious review, and stated that since we know what the problem is, we need to address it.

Borough Assemblyman Jim Sykes thanked everyone attending the meeting, especially the troopers and DA. He stated that there are questions that we should be asking, Are you satisfied with the way things are? How is it going to be paid for? He has heard that a police force could increase property taxes by 1 – 2 mils, while our own troopers could be as much as 5 – 6 mils. 2005 is the date of the last available online report on crime in the Mat-Su Borough, and it is available on the website. At that time, 61% of the persons questioned said that they felt that crime was serious – it hasn't gotten any better. Talk to your legislators. There are also other positive things out there as well – Neighborhood Watch, faith and other based interventions, etc. This meeting is a great positive step – keep it up!

8:00 pm – Representative Mark Neuman was present via telephone, however due to a microphone issue he was unable to be heard.

8:15 pm – Meadow Lakes Business Representatives – All persons heard under Public Comment

8:30 pm – Public Comment

Patti Fisher presented correspondence from Lou Fikes, which stated that Big Lake is operating an aerial civil patrol. This patrol is coordinated with the stated troopers, and has incorporated persons into the patrol that have the training and experience to participate. Patti stated that she is not suggesting that Meadow Lakes take this route, however she does find it to be an interesting idea. Trooper Dunn said that he is unaware of any agreement. When troopers arrive on scene, all they see are persons in dark clothing, which is in itself a recipe for disaster. He suggests extreme caution with this, as persons participating could find themselves involved in a criminal prosecution, which is not the end goal any of us are looking for. Patti said she is aware of persons in the community who have expressed interest in this, and thanked Trooper Dunn for his input.

Patti Fisher would like to send resolutions to our state government, our borough, and our local government addressing these issues. She would also like to see funding for Neighborhood Watch, as they are now completely staffed by volunteers. She feels that we need more troopers, and wants to advise the Department of Public Safety that we want to see them hired.

Mike Koskovich stated that we have a serious neighborhood problem with drugs and crime, which are joined at the hip. He said that he cannot count the number of used syringes that are found throughout the neighborhood during the spring cleanup event. SB91 is a huge mistake, and he encouraged everyone to contact their legislators and tell them to revoke it. We need these people off the streets and out of our neighborhoods. He also suggested filing a "flight plan" if you are a snowbird, letting your neighbors know that you are gone. Let's take care of each other and improve our community.

Rick Taylor thanked the troopers for their time. He stated that he is out and about in the neighborhood several times during the night and it is appalling to see what is happening. He said that about 75% of the time when he is out at night he sees people passed out in their cars and doing other things they should not be doing. He sees them congregate around mailboxes, wide spots in the road, sides of the highways, etc. He suggests taking their picture. Mr.

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Taylor commented that there are a lot of night crawlers out there, and we need to show them the light of day.

Eugene Carl Haberman complimented the community council in bringing this town hall together to address crime in the valley. The government needs to hear from the public as to what their concerns are.

Cindy Bettine thanked Patti Fisher for attending the Big Lake meeting, as well as the persons from Big Lake in attendance at tonight's meeting. She also thanked Mayor Halter for bringing up the public safety service area, and asks that the borough put a hard cost to that idea, allowing people to make an informed decision as to whether they would be willing to pay for this service. She has reviewed the 2005 crime report, and feels that several of the programs mentioned in it are not being funded at this time. She stated that she would like to see a blue ribbon task force set up with a recommendation to the governor.

Vicky Wallner is the founder of Stop Valley Thieves Facebook page, and she said that there is a copy of the 2005 crime report on the Facebook page. Vicky said that SB91 was the largest and most comprehensive crime reform bill in the United States, and while there are some good things in SB91, the bad things are so bad she doesn't believe it can be fixed. She feels SB91 is a crime tax – the government is saving money and we are footing the bill. Do we need more troopers? Absolutely we need more troopers! She stated that their pay scale is terrible, and asked the persons in attendance if they would be willing to risk their lives every day to receive the same pay as a Lynden truck driver. Vicky stated that Sutton Community Council pays for their own community patrol, and would recommend that the patrol is unarmed. It takes everyone to make this work – please know your neighbor, as they will most likely be your first responder.

Sherri Rusher thanked the troopers and other presenters. She feels the source of this problem is drug addiction. Although drug addiction is classified as a disease, Sherri feels it is more of a choice, and should be punished as such. In addition to a total repeal of HB91 and HB54, Sherri would also like to see more troopers.

David Hornung thanked the troopers for the incredible job that they are doing. He stated that he has friends who are troopers, and they are arresting the same individuals over and over again. His take from the meeting tonight is that we are basically on our own, and he is extremely frustrated by this. As someone who previously worked in dispatch for APD, he knows that a 6 minute response time is the longest 6 minutes in a victim's life. David is in support of community patrols, and while he realizes that the troopers may not always appreciate them, he has seen firsthand the difference that they can make. He stated he is willing and able to participate in a community patrol, and would like to work with troopers to obtain the necessary training.

Maureen Morgan asked how many people in attendance have actually been robbed and quite a few hands went up. She stated that she herself has been robbed three times, and asked what she can do to protect herself when people are trying to break into her home. Trooper Dunn said he would give her the same answer that he would give his wife. If someone is breaking into your home and you believe that you are going to die or be injured, you may pull the trigger. He also said that you will never forget that action once you take it, so please make a serious decision before pulling the trigger. He also advised that any shooting is subject to investigation. Maureen thanked him for his advice, and said that troopers have responded quickly each time she called.

Craig Odom said that he is new to the Meadow Lakes area and feels that although everyone here would like to speak, many people won't. He stated that we all have the same problems and issues, and if we don't speak up, nothing will be done and things will remain the same. The people need to tell their government what they expect and hold them accountable. He has recently met his neighbors, and feels that his neighborhood is a little bit scary. He loves his property, even though he feels he wasn't given full disclosure prior to purchasing it.

Edie Grunwald said that she had heard the troopers may be getting more canines, as the community had received more money than they had asked for. While she knows this isn't the answer, it could be an asset.

President Patti Fisher closed out the public comments section of the meeting by reviewing the recommendations that were received tonight, which are listed below:

1. Make a recommendation to repeal SB91 with a resolution to the governor's office
2. Ask the borough to create a blue ribbon task force addressing what they would like to see in the borough
3. Funding for drug rehab by resolution to the governor's office

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4. Hire more troopers and give them decent retirement funding. Trooper Dunn says we are losing troopers to posts with higher pay and better retirement programs.
5. Monetary support for Neighborhood Watch
6. Possibility of adding a borough sheriff's department

Agency Reports – Roy Roistacher from West Lakes Fire Department said that they had been extremely busy during the windy weather. He thanked Otto Feather for his support, and invited everyone to the open house for the new Station 72 on February 24, 2018 at 10:00 am.

Approve Meeting Location –

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

Wednesday, March 14, 2018
Sign In: 6PM to 7PM
Meeting: 7PM to 9PM

Patti Fisher awarded tonight's door prizes to the following members – Cindy Michaelson, Greg Leader, Mike Koskovich and Jenny Feather.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 pm.

Sherril Rusher ³⁻¹⁴⁻¹⁸ *for Jan Henkel*

Janet Henkel, Secretary Date

Patricia Fisher

Patricia Fisher, President Date