

City of Valdez

*212 Chenega Ave.
Valdez, AK 99686*



Meeting Minutes - Draft

Tuesday, January 12, 2021

7:00 PM

Regular Meeting

Council Chambers

Parks & Recreation
Commission

REGULAR AGENDA - 7:00 PM**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The Parks & Recreation Regular Commission Meeting was called to order at 7:01 PM, at the Valdez City Council Chambers, by Commissioner Sarah Jorgenson-Owen.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: 5- Commissioner Sarah Jorgenson-Owen
 Commissioner Brian Teale
 Commissioner Ben Rush
 Commissioner Pete Carter
 Commissioner Michael Britt

Absent/Excused: 1- Commission Chair Amy Goold

Also Present: 2- PRCS Director Nickolas Farline
 PRCS Office Manager Anne (Nikki) Duhamel

III. PUBLIC BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

Commissioner Sarah Jorgenson-Owen asked if there was anyone that would like to come and speak about non-agenda items. Commissioner Jorgenson-Owen also specified that Public Business from the Floor has a five minute speaking limit per person.

Citizen Matt Smelcer spoke before the Parks & Recreation Commission about the Ice Rink and his current frustrations. Mr. Smelcer said he was told by Director Farline the Parks Department didn't have the funds for an ice rink. Mr. Smelcer said that's not a big deal to him he is a "worker bee" and will make things happen. Mr. Smelcer stated the new temporary location where the ice rink is, isn't the best due to uneven ground. The rink has to be built up more one side, so it has been a challenge. Mr. Smelcer said he will have people skating on the rink sometime this winter with or without the help from the Parks Department. Mr. Smelcer noted the folks from Public Works have been helping with plowing when permitted, and Mr. Smelcer is very appreciative of that. Mr. Smelcer feels very frustrated with Commission, and how the ice rink has been brought to Commission for many years and have had countless studies done, yet nothing has been done. Mr. Smelcer's explains the Valdez community has shown a vast amount of interest in having an ice rink. Matt Smelcer commented on how the ice rink was number two on the priority list that come from the Master Plan survey. Mr. Smelcer mentioned the Disk Golf Course and how fewer people showed interests in it over the years, but it's built. Mr. Smelcer noted his time spent as a Parks & Recreation Commissioner and feels confident only 50-60 people showed interest in a Disk Golf Course. He doesn't feel the Commission sees any value in the ice rink. Mr. Smelcer impression is that the community has shown the value of the ice rink by filling out the survey and coming in as number two on the

priority list. Mr. Smelcer expressed the community of Valdez has shown its want for an ice rink the last 20+ years.

Commissioner Jorgenson-Owen apologized to Mr. Smelcer and stated his five minutes was up. Mr. Smelcer commented he would like the record to show he was cut off even though he is the only person at tonight's meeting to speak on a matter that is not on the agenda. Mr. Smelcer also brought up that the Commission has not had a meeting in months, and feels he should be able to speak. Commission Members apologized and permitted Mr. Smelcer to continue. Mr. Smelcer also apologized for his passionate response when he was told his time was up. Mr. Smelcer asked the Commission to implore Director Farline, on why Parks & Recreation isn't building an ice rink and make sure the Director gives you a good explanation, so that way the people of Valdez knows why there isn't an ice rink. Mr. Smelcer pointed out that ice skating is a great activity to do while still social distancing. Mr. Smelcer also brought up that when the ice rink has put on events it has larger turn outs than most Parks & Recreation events. Mr. Smelcer claims his frustration is not understanding as to why the Parks & Recreation department or Commission still has not built an ice rink or offered it a permanent home. Mr. Smelcer said he wants to work with Commission and the Parks & Recreation Department and see some movement, and willing to do whatever it takes. Mr. Smelcer pointed out he looked at the closing budget from last year and was told that there wasn't any money left for an ice rink. Yet at the end of the year the Valdez City Council was presented a budget with money left over, Mr. Smelcer claimed. Mr. Smelcer stated he has looked over this year's budget hoping to see something about the ice rink, but nowhere in the budget is there anything about the ice rink. Mr. Smelcer stated he was promised a ready rink for this winter by Director Farline, but it didn't happen. Mr. Smelcer stated to Commissioners if they have questions at any time please contact him. Commissioner Teale inquired what all an ice rink kit includes. Mr. Smelcer explained the different types of ice rink kits and what they provided. Commissioner Teale then asked if the Multi-use Recreation Center plans to have an ice rink in it. Mr. Smelcer states to the Commission to be aware he is here speaking on the behalf others, and not just himself.

Director Farline reminded everyone what the purpose of the Public Business from the Floor is for, and what Commissions responsibly is, so this matter could be brought back to a Commission meeting as an agenda item.

Commissioner Jorgenson-Owen states if there is four head nods, this item can be placed in New Business on the next Commission Meeting February 9, 2021. Commissioners agreed, this item will be placed on next month's agenda. Commissioner Teale thanked Matt Smelcer for holding their feet to the fire. Commissioners thanked Matt Smelcer. Mr. Smelcer thanked Commissioner for their time.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

1. [Shooting Range safety and upgrade prioritization](#)

MOTION: Commissioner Pete Carter motioned to put Shooting Range safety and upgrade prioritization up for discussion. Motion Seconded by Commissioner Ben Rush.

Commissioner Jorgenson-Owen asked Director Farline to give a briefing.

Director Farline gave awareness on what is to come of the last work session. Commissioners were presented with a hard copy of the recommendations that came from the work session (iPad document). The list of recommendations could coincided with one of the following: safety, safety and an upgrade, or just an upgrade. Director Farline explain the reasoning for this is to allow a menu like option for City Council. Director Farline expressed he is looking for Commission and the public to have some discussion, so he can get an idea of what the highest priority to the lowest priorities are. After that is established Director Farline said he would provide said information to the Capital Facility's Director, so Council can have all the information when they are ready to talk about all the Capital Facility projects throughout the City. Director Farline asked Commissioners if they had any questions about the process before prioritizing the list of recommendations. Commissioners Carter and Teale both stated that their iPad's weren't working. Director Farline informed them to get in touch with the IT Department. Commissioner Sarah Jorgenson-Owen lent her iPad to her fellow Commissioners for the deration of this meeting. Commissioner Jorgenson-Owen read aloud the list of recommendations and what the work session defined as safety, safety and an upgrade, or just an upgrade. Commissioner Carter explained what his priority list is, and would like to see wind barricade/trees added to the list of recommendations. Commissioner Teale mentioned he don't know much about shooting ranges and would like to hear from someone with more understanding on the matter.

Citizen Carl Gressel came to Commission tonight to share his thoughts on the Shooting Range safety. In a loose order, Mr. Gressel suggested/agreed with the idea of range flags and a target system with the addition of steal targets. Director Farline mentioned that some items on the list presented to Commission are just for our Parks Maintenance Department to install, like the flags, it's something that could be done without having it as a Capital Improvement Project. Mr. Gressel continued on with stating a shooting house would be nice to get out of the wind and prevent people from walking onto the range when others are actively shooting. A shooting house would considerably improve the safety and comfort, it's not something that would have to be elaborate. Then plowing of the Shooting Range, Mr. Gressel realizes there has been some push back on that topic, but having operated heavy equipment Mr. Gressel feels it is doable. Carl Gressel went into some great details about clean-up. Mr. Gressel also feels the volunteer program/process needs to be more streamlined. Carl Gressel said it is a small town with a lot of interest and support for the Range, again there just needs to be an easy streamlined way for people to assist with the clean-up. Commissioner Jorgenson-Owen clarified somethings about what goes to Capital Improvements Project and what is feasible to do without it going to Capital Improvements. Mr. Gressel emphasized that with a shooting house it would allow for Gun Safety classes to held. In the past you would have to be in one location then drive out to the Range for the other part of the class. Carl Gressel said he had one objection about there being no fully automatic guns. Mr. Gressel stated they are supper rare and have a very lengthy process to possess one, however he does understand were the concerns are coming from. Mr. Gressel said there is a lot of the community that has expressed interest in having a shot gun range back as well. Commissioner Carter asked Mr. Gressel if he had herd his idea of a temporary wind fence and planting trees to help with the wind (that is Capital

Improvement). Mr. Gressel stated he is not familiar with how good a wind fencing is, but if it would help it would be great. Commissioner Carter also inquired if Mr. Gressel feels the gun range is a place that could hold events like a biathlons (where people ski and shoot). Commissioner Carter mentioned that he heard that Valdez use to have something like that. Mr. Gressel answered by stating if it's feasible, it would be really popular. Commissioner Pete Carter agreed. Commission Teale confirmed there was once was a biathlon course in Valdez many years ago. Carl Gressel agrees the idea of a biathlon is really cool, and would be easy to get people interested in doing. Commissioner Sarah Jorgenson-Owen jumped in and explained what category a biathlon would fall under. Commissioner Carter redirected to maintenance, and inquired about equipment that could be used. Mr. Gressel said the benefits from using a loader and pushing all the snow to the back of the range would help greatly with safety, and easier for clean-up.

Citizen Sam Lares spoke to Commission about "3-Gun" (Multi-Gun, often also called 2-Gun or 3-Gun depending on the types of firearms used, are practical shooting events where each of the stages require the competitor to use a combination of handguns, rifles, and/or shotguns) and how in the work session not a lot of people were aware of what that is. Mr. Lares stated he has compiled an email with attachments, unfortunately he had to put it all together pretty last minute as he is currently supposed to be out of town. Mr. Lares took the time and effort to call around to other gun ranges to get information to forward on to Commission about 3-Gun and how to successfully run something like that. Mr. Lares feels that a steel target range would be the way to go/standers, he is unsure if a wire range would work with wind being the biggest enemy. Sam Lares asked Director Farline if his email had been forward to the Commissioners yet. Director Farline stated he has not forwarded the email. Sam Lares then explained to Commission what types of attachments and information is provided in his email. Commissioner Sarah Jorgenson-Owen thanked Mr. Lares for his time and effort he has put in and she looks forward to seeing his email. Commissioner Jorgenson-Owen mentioned that a lot of the information Mr. Lares has shared properly won't fit with tonight's meeting just because it's Capital Improvement Project, but agree that would be a good direction to go. Mr. Lares also agreed that having a shelter/enclosed place to shoot from would be nice, but would also like to see it have some type of heat. Director Farline states his impressions on the Trap House is to move it, and have an enclosed shooting area as well. Mr. Lares suggested/inquired about berms at the Shooting Range and gave some ideas on how to put those berms. Director Farline stated adding additional berm-edge to the range as been discussed, and what came of that was to have the rifle and pistol shooting as an extension on the current covered area with some kind of divider. Mr. Lares brought to attention that rifle shooting and pistol shooting is very different in the volume of firing and reloading, and it would be nice to have different lanes to use. Mr. Lares gave some feedback on Commissioner Carter's comment about skiing, and how to truly utilize the recreation opportunities out at the Valdez Glacier and Shooting Range. Director Farline and Commissioner Jorgenson-Owen thanked Mr. Lares.

Commissioner Sarah Jorgenson-Owen gave brief details on what needs to be done to keep things moving in the right direction to have this presented to Council for the Capital Improvement Plan. Director Farline said that all the things on the list are already in the Capital improvement spread sheet. Director Farline went over his take away of what was discussed for top priorities to the bottom priorities. Director Farline asked that if he wasn't correct about anything he listed as the priorities to please let him know. Director Farline confirmed he would add wind fencing to the list. Director Farline also stated that the volunteer programs, shooting range signs, safety training, and the 2-Gun steel

challenge are things that could be part of just the operational budget as opposed to the Capital Facility budget. Again Director Farline enquired if the prioritization is being represented correctly. Citizen Sam Lares came back up to speak about 2-Gun and how there is a couple local business owners that would like to get involved to make it happen. Mr. Lares also thinks it would be affordable/doable to expanding the length of the shooting range off the existing range to about 500yrd, and have a fixed target range which would be primarily used by hunters. Director Farline appreciates all the input, and said that he has that listed as an upgrade item. Commissioner Sarah Jorgenson-Owen vocally said what her take on the list of priorities is. Commissioner Carter asked if there was a cost consideration on the recommendations. Director Farline gave an explanation on how the assessment of cost processes is done. Commissioner Teale thanked Mr. Lares for the informative information he has given to the Commission. Commissioner Teale asked Mr. Lares about berms and what could be used. Mr. Lares explained that in Alaska we are limited on resources and with concert he isn't sure how well it could withstand our weather. Mr. Lares said he is willing to go and get some answers on that. Commissioner Sarah Jorgenson-Owen read the list out loud again to make sure the commission agreed on the prioritized list.

Motion: Commissioner Carter moved to use the prioritized list that was discussed. Seconded by Commissioner Britt.

2. [Feasibility Study Multi-use Recreation Center/Indoor Recreation Facility](#)

Motion: Commissioner Teale Moved to place the Feasibility Study Multi-use Recreation Center/Indoor Recreation Facility on the floor for discussion. Seconded by Commissioner Rush.

Director Farline stated this feasibility study was included in the 2021 budget. This was presented to Council and the feasibility study was approved as well as the 2021 budget. Director Farline stated there has been an RFP submitted. As of this meeting there have been a few organizations that have responded. Director Farline asked if Commission is aware of the purpose of a feasibility study. Commission stated they are all aware. Director Farline continued on and stated the number one things that has been identified is the need for indoor recreation space. Director Farline stated the current Recreation Center is due in the next few years to have several million dollars' worth or renovations, the building is reaching the end of it life cycle. Director Farline noted the most communicated need for recreation is to have indoor recreation space for the winter months. Commissioner Teale asked if the Recreation Center was obsolete. Director Farline explained that it's not obsolete but in need of some major renovations. Director Farline explained that the purpose of this feasibility study is to address the true needs for Valdez. Commissioner Teale asked what all would be include in a multi-use Recreation Center. Commissioner Jorgenson-Owen explained to Commissioner Teale that is what the feasibility study would be addressing. Commissioner Teale asked what the cost of a feasibility study. Director Farline said it was part of the Master Plan and is expected to be between 20-30 thousand dollars. Commissioner Teale gave kudos to the Parks & Recreation for utilizing all the available time between schools scheduled activities, but noted every year there is

struggles with the limited amount of space and time. Commissioner Sarah Jorgenson-Owen agreed. Director Farline asked Commission if they were happy with the communication process that took place with the Master Plan and the Meal Hill Plan, and if they wish to have it continue with the Feasibility Study. Commissioners agreed. Commissioner Carter asked if the feasibility study would reflect findings from the Master Plan and Meal Hill Plan. Commissioner Jorgenson-Owen confirmed that the feasibility study is to utilize the current information that has been already gathered.

V. REPORTS

1. [PRCS 2020 Annual Report](#)

Director Farline presented the Commission with hard copies of the PRCS 2020 Annual Report. Director Farline gave Office Manager, Nikki Duhamel kudos for all the work she did on putting the report together. Director Farline inquired if any of the Commissioners had questions or comments regarding the report. Commissioner Teale stated the trail work that has been done is great, and feels they are in the best shape they have ever been in. Commissioner Jorgenson-Owen asked about how the count for the facilities is being counted. Director Farline clarified how the count works. Commissioner Jorgenson-Owen gave kudos as to how well put together the 2020 annual report is, and how well the staff has adapted with the current Covid-19 situation. Director Farline also gave appreciation to the PRCS staff and how well they have worked through the Covid-19 situation.

Commissioners and Director Farline discussed the best way to notify Commission of upcoming meetings, and when the agenda should be available.

VI. COMMISSION BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

Commissioner Britt inquired why the multi-use trails out by Robe River subdivision was closed. Commissioners mentioned that there was just recently a ski meet. Director Farline said he would look into that. Commissioner Teale thanked Commissioner Sarah Jorgenson-Owen for running the meeting, and that it's not always an easy task to do. Commissioner Teale added that the trails look great. Commissioner Carter gave kudos on how great the grooming of the trails have been and asked about updates for Meals Hill. Director Farline shared he would have updates to present to Commission at the next meeting about Meals Hill. Commissioner Rush gave his support to Commissioner Jorgenson-Owen on how she handled tonight's meeting. Commissioner Rush said he is excited to hear the Salmonberry Ski Hill is opening this weekend. Commissioner Rush inquired information on the pavilion usage for the winter. Director Farline informed Commissioner Rush on the pavilion rentals.

Commissioner Teale asked for some clarity on how the (4) four head nods works to get a subject added as an agenda item. Director Farline gave clarification. Commissioner Rush asked how to get items added to the agenda prior to a Commission meeting. Commissioner Britt gave great insight on how that is done. Director Farline all added it would have to be more than just one Commissioner requesting to have it added to the agenda..

VII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business the Parks and Recreation Regular Commissioner Meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Sarah Jorgenson-Owen at 9:22 PM.