

# City of Valdez

212 Chenega Ave.  
Valdez, AK 99686



## Meeting Minutes - Draft

Tuesday, November 10, 2020

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 by Commissioner Amy Goold, in the Valdez City Council Chambers at 7:00pm.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Present	5-	Commissioner Amy Goold Commissioner Ben Rush Commissioner Sarah Jorgenson-Owen Commissioner Brian Teale Commissioner Pete Carter
Absent/unexcused	1-	Commissioner Michael Britt
Also Present	2-	PRCS Director Nick Farline PRCS Office Manager Ann (Nikki) Duhamel

**III. PUBLIC BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR**

There was no public business from the floor.

**IV. CONSENT AGENDA**

**Motion: Commissioner Sarah Jorgenson-Owen moved to put the Shooting Range Winter Closure first for discussion and put P&R Trail Sub-Committee second. Motion Seconded by Commissioner Ben Rush.**

**V. NEW BUSINESS**

**Motion: Commissioner Jorgenson-Owen moved to put the Shooting Range Winter Closure on the floor for discussion. Seconded by Commissioner Rush.**

1. [Shooting Range Winter Closure.](#)

Director Farline informed the Commission on the recommendations from the Valdez City legal team and risk assessor. One of their recommendations is to try and decrease the amount of large objects being brought onto the range, so Parks & Recreation Department mitigated a fence. Director Farline explained the fence was approved by this Commission then it was brought forward to the Valdez City Council as a budget item and then was approved by Valdez City Council in 2019. The fence didn't get put up until August 2020. The other concerns that came up was to address the environmental and safety issues at the Public Shooting Range and the Police Shooting Range. The consultant that was hired to assess our shooting ranges, has assessed shooting ranges all over Alaska and the Lower 48. The consultant suggested closure of the shooting range in the winter if the City of Valdez couldn't monitor or make sure unshootable items couldn't be brought onto the ranges. Director Farline

proceeded to say these suggestions were presented to himself and the legal team. Director Farline implied it's his duty as the Director to bring this forward as a discussion item to the Commission. Director Farline communicated that the Parks & Recreation Department isn't advocating for a seasonal closer or against seasonal closer, right now this is just a discussion item, no voting will be taking place at this time. Commissioner Teale said he is not a devoted Shooting Range user, but when he drives by the Shooting Range it's usually in use. Commissioner Teale is glad to see members of the community at tonight's Commission Meeting. Commissioner Carter asked the other Commissioners if the Police Range was open to the public. Director Farline informed Commissioner Carter that the Police Range is for the police only. Commissioner Carter inquired about the spring clean-up and whom all is involved with it. Director Farline gave brief insight on the history of the Shooting Range and how clean-up has happened in the past. Commissioner Carter asked for some clarification on the recommendations from the assessment. Director Farline clarified that the concerns in the winter is not being able to see items left behind in the snow and the amount of large trash brought to the range. Commissioner Amy Goold enquired if there has been any reduction in trash being brought to the range since the fence has been put in place. Director Farline confirmed it has absolutely helped. Commissioner Jorgenson-Owen asked if shutting down shooting ranges in the winter is a normal practice. Director Farline said he is only aware of the assessors' recommendations. Director Farline shared that the assessor mentioned that other ranges similar to the Valdez Shooting Range that operates in the winter months has an organization or a club that is monitoring said range, and addition to that they also have a range safety officer, and an environmental safety plan. Director Farline corroborated that the Valdez Shooting Range doesn't have those things in place, and the Parks & Recreation Department don't actively staff the Shooting Range. Commissioner Rush asked if there were any documentation to show the usage amount of the Shooting Range. Director Farline said no, but it is a highly used recreation facility. Commissioner Rush then asked about shooting clubs. Director Farline is not aware of any shooting clubs in Valdez. Commissioners mentioned they know there was once a Trapping club and the Valdez High School has a Rifle Club. Commissioner Jorgenson-Owen noted that every time she has drove by the shooting range it was being used. Commissioner Amy Goold agreed with Commissioner Sarah Jorgenson-Owen. Commissioner Goold mentioned the Shooting Range is something that comes up often and is happy to hear the fence is making a difference, she also thinks Commission needs to keep an eye on this facility. Commissioners agreed it would be nice to see something happen that keeps the Shooting Range operating. Commissioner Jorgenson-Owen doesn't want to see the range closed for anytime. Commissioner Goold specified it's not that we have to close it in the winter, at this time it's only a recommendation. Commissioner Goold said it feels like a gut punch with it already being winter, but alternatively there is the possibility of putting up additional signage, and try to mitigate some of the concerns, then look into next winter and ways to prepare. Director Farline said the number one goal is to have the Shooting Range open, safe, and a better experience for participants. Director Farline said the Parks & Recreation Department has included upgrades for the Shooting Range in the Capital Improvement Plan. Director Farline mentioned he is working on a proposal to present to the Commission in 2021 to talk about a RFV to try and encourage and fund a club to take on the day to day operations of the Shooting Range. Commissioner Rush inquired about a possible incident that might have occurred at the Shooting Range. Commissioners were not aware of this incident. Director Farline spoke-up and stated there has been some reports of ricochet incidents. Commissioner Carter addressed that there are two big problems. One is the ricochet, due to things being covered by snow and two, pollution. Commissioner Carter wondered about increased surveillance. Commissioner Goold mentioned the Commission has discussed the usage of cameras in the past. Director Farline does not recommended the use of surveillance cameras, he feels there are other ways to mitigate the issue besides using cameras. Commissioner Goold feels most people that use this facility do care for it, there is just a few people that have no respect, she also feels like it's a huge gut punch to take it away from the ones that do respect it so quickly. Commissioner Goold continued by saying there could be more signage. Commissioner Teale is interested in hearing from the public on this current

situation. Commissioner Goold then asked if anyone from the public would like to come and speak now is the time, and explained the five minute time limit for speaking.

Citizen Carl Gressel come before the Commission to express his concerns and ideas. Mr. Gressel mentioned he has a local Facebook page called Valdez Alaska Gun Club and Talk, this page was started because of issues with the Shooting Range. Mr. Gressel mentioned he has had a problem with ricochet and has personally witnessed it happen to other individuals, when the ricochet happened Mr. Gressel pointed out it was from the type of targets being used, and Director Farline was instrumental in getting the unsafe targets removed. Carl Gressel said he has been working hard on trying to get a volunteer group together to do some clean-up of the Shooting Range. Mr. Gressel feels there are a lot of people ready to help with the upkeep, but there needs to be more guidance, help, and commination from the city side. Carl Gressel said himself and others had concerns when the fence went up at the Shooting Range about it being closed, and sure enough we are at a Commission Meeting talking about a possible closer of the Shooting Range. Mr. Gressel suggested a few ways of keeping the Shooting Range clear and operational for the winter months. Mr. Gressel mentioned that if you're not into doing a lot of outdoor recreation i.e. skiing, snowboarding, winter hiking, or if you don't have the money to have snowmachine, or four-wheelers, going to the Shooting Range is a nice activity that is affordable. With Covid-19 going on Mr. Gressel believes we need to have as many outdoor activities offered as possible. Carl Gressel also stated that if the Shooting Range is closed the City of Valdez will have shooting in other areas that might not be a safe shooting area. Mr. Gressel then spoke of an incident from 30+ years ago about a lady that got shot in Mineral Creek area from an accidental shot that missed a bird and went up over the hill and the bullet hit her. Commissioner Amy Goold had to cut Mr. Gressel off due to the five minute speaking limit. Commissioners thanked Mr. Gressel for his time and insight. Commissioner Teale thanked Mr. Gressel for telling him about his Facebook Page. Commissioner Sarah Jorgenson-Owen said Mr. Gressel brought up very valid points and she agreed with them all.

Citizen Sam Lares came before Commission tonight to express his option on why the Shooting Range should stay open. Mr. Lares agreed with what Carl Gressel had to say. Sam Lares grew up in Valdez and stated the Shooting Range was a big part of his life and still is. If you don't have the means to have snowmachine or you're not really into skiing, and snowboarding all you're left with for outdoor recreation in the Shooting Range. Sam Lares feels the Shooting Range is less dangerous than the other sports, because he has never gotten a broken bone or hurt at a shooting range. Mr. Lares also feel Commission needs to do a better job of communicating as he didn't even hear of this meeting until last minute. Commission thanked Sam Lares.

Citizen Patrick Pawlowski come before Commission tonight to share his insight. Mr. Pawlowski said he has been part of a gun clubs in other states that had shooting ranges that were open to the public. Mr. Pawlowski briefed Commission on how said clubs were ran. Patrick Pawlowski also said the gun clubs allowed the public to use there shooting ranges so they had a safe place to shoot. Mr. Pawlowski also agrees with what Mr. Gressel had to say. Mr. Pawlowski asked Commissioners about signage located at the Valdez Shooting Range. Director Farline stated there is signage out there that list what not to do or have at the Shooting Range. Director Farline also mentioned that Parks & Recreation just received some new signage today in the mail. Director Farline identified that part of the plan to move forward is to get permeant target structures. Mr. Pawlowski asked if there was any signage on how to safely use your firearm. Director Farline noted there is the Ten Commandments of Gun Safety. Mr. Pawlowski said he has only used the Valdez Shooting Range twice since moving to Valdez, and he suggested a flag to indicate when the range is hot or cold (safe to enter the firing lane or not). Mr. Pawlowski Said Valdez is a great place with a great shooting range and feels if you close the Shoot Range you will be creating an unsafe environment. Commissioners thanked Mr. Pawlowski.

Citizen Ken Lares came before the Commission and said he has been going to the Shooting Range for 20+ years and hasn't seen any changes made to the range in that time. Ken Lares asked what the cost of maintaining the range is. Director Farline stated he didn't have an exact dollar amount. Ken Lares stated he feels it's a pretty low cost asset. Director Farline agreed with Ken Lares. Mr. Lares also feel the Shooting Range is less important compared to the rest of the Parks & Recreation facilities and what is offered. Mr. Lares said he is in support of the fence he believes it will help with some of the trash problem, but the talk of closing the Shooting Range is not a positive look. Ken Lares wants to know what kind of effort is being put in to maintain the Shooting Range compared to the other recreation offered in town. There is a lot of community usage at that Shooting Range and Ken Lares said he has seen some awesome activities and events that have been produced by Parks & Recreation in the last year. Ken Lares feels the City of Valdez has neglected the shooting range for many years, but should be improving the Shooting Range because of how used it is. Ken Lares said it would be nice to see a private range/club but Valdez just don't have one, and Mr. Lares feels Valdez most likely won't get one. Property is difficult to get, shooting sport themselves are difficult in general. Mr. Lares used the Trap range as an example of where the City of Valdez promised to move the Trap Range because they could no longer use it with Corbin Creek subdivision being put in, but that never happened the Trap Range is still sitting in the same spot unusable. Mr. Lares feels Parks & Recreation needs to mitigate a plan first, prior to shutting down the only shooting range offered to the community to use. Director Farline mentioned that part of the Capital Improvement Plan has include the Shooting Range. Director Farline said Parks & Recreation is working on ways to safely keep the range operational. Ken Lares asked for clarification on why the range is being discussed for a closer. Director Farline informed Ken Lares of the recommendations that where giving to Parks & Recreation about the Shooting Range.

Commissioner Teale agreed that the Shooting Range is a popular recreation facility and defiantly need to find a way to improve and keep it open. Commissioner Teale stated it should be a top priority. Commissioner Teale also feels it would be more of a safety problem if the Shooting Range was closed for the winter. Commissioner Amy Goold wanted to bring to light that closing the Shooting Range was a recommendation from a third party, and Director Farline is doing his due diligent by bring this issue before Commission to share information and be transparent about the whole situation. Commissioner Jorgenson-Owen asked Director Farline what Commission can do to help so the Shooting Range doesn't have to close for the winter. Director Farline suggested a work session on some mitigation strategies. Commissioner Sarah Jorgenson-Owen asked Director Farline what would be the correct way to contact Parks & Recreation Department, because they are doing their due diligent by coming to the Commission Meeting. Commissioner Jorgenson-Owen just wants to make sure Commission is doing their due diligent as well. Director Farline stated he has Mr. Gressels information and will personal reach out to him, also Director Farline apologized for the late posting of the Agenda for tonight's meeting and noted he will make sure to get the next agenda posted sooner.

Citizen Sam Lares got back up and spoke of what he feels is a safety concern. He brought up that the Shooting Range currently is in a wind tunnel from the Valdez Glacier, and how he has personal had is guns and supplies blown around/knocked off the stand. Sam Lares also mentioned how he has traveled hundreds of miles and spent thousands of dollars going to other shooting ranges just so he can get data without the wind. If the City of Valdez put up a fence with some plastic on the side that all the wind comes from it would really improve the safety. Mr. Lares mentioned how the Coast Guard is one of the bigger groups that use the facility and one of the biggest rules of shooting edict is do not shoot across the line of fire. Mr. Lares stated he has personal witnessed active duty Coast Guard doing such things. Sam Lares said the best range he has gone to is in Kenai Alaska, and what made it the best was there was a place to shoot without being in the wind. Director Farline truly appreciated Sam Lares feedback and this is all good information to bring to a Commission work session.

Commissioner Amy Goold thanked all the people that came to show their support as a group.

2. [P&R Trail Sub-Committee](#)

**MOTION: Commissioner Sarah Jorgenson-Owen moved to place the P&R Trail Sub-Committee on the floor for discussion. Seconded by Commissioner Pete Carter.**

Director Farline said this agenda item came from the Parks & Recreation Master Plan. This committee would be made up of three of our current commission members to really look and evaluate our trail systems, and fill PRCS staff in with classification of trails. Director Farline added the committee would also be able to give recommendation on the size of trails and weight limits for trails. Director Farline is excited to see what recommendations come out this committee. Commissioner Teale thanked Director Farline for bring this sub-committee. Commissioner Teale then spoke of some of the trail history in Valdez. Commissioner Teale suggestion is to open this committee up to more than just the three Parks & Recreation Commission Members. Commissioner Teale explained there is a lot of people in the community that are interested in the trail systems, but Commissioner Teale himself said he is pretty busy these days, but knows there is a lot of younger citizens that would be interested in something like this. Commissioner Jorgenson-Owen asked if the Sub-Committee would be open to the public and the Commissioners or just the Commission Members. Commissioner Jorgenson-Owen agreed with Commissioner Teale that having a couple community members on the Sub-Committee is a great idea. Commissioner Jorgenson-Owen believes it will give well-rounded recommendations. Director Farline appreciated both Commissioners comments. Director Farline said the idea for tonight was to engage some interest from Commissioners and then the Sub-committee can identify the needs. Director Farline sees his role as a facilitator for the Sub-Committee. Director Farline feels it would be great if the Sub-Committee could get people from other departments like Parks Maintenance to join as well. The trail system care comes from different departments for different reasons. Director Farline discussed the reasoning for only three commission members. Commissioner Amy Goold asked if there is currently any Commissioners ready to put their name in the hat. Commissioner Teale passed because he don't feel he has the time to put all the work in that is needed and he would like to see younger people get involved. Commissioner Sarah Jorgenson-Owen mentioned she would be willing to be on the sub-Committee if there wasn't other commission members more interested. Commissioner Jorgenson-Owen also feels strongly that if the Sub-Committee is only made up of three Commissioners not much is going to get done. A Commissioner spoke but was unable to hear on the recording what was asked. Commissioner Amy Goold answered the question by saying she don't think there is a limit of how many members can be on the Sub-Committee just the number of commission members that can be on the Sub-Committee. Director Farline agreed with Commissioner Goold, but stipulated there is just a few things you have to make sure not to do, like have more than three commissioners at a time due to the open meetings act. Commissioner Teale said he would like to see someone that has passion and knowledge of the trails and recreation be on the Sub-Committee. Commissioner Amy Goold asked Commissioner Rush what his feelings are. Due to audio could not hear what was said from Commissioner Rush. Commissioner Teale suggested getting to go out into the public and hand-pick members because this is such a unique opportunity. Commissioner Jorgenson-Owen said there is no reason this can't be told to the public that way if they want to serve on the committee they have an opportunity to do so. Commissioner Rush spoke again but could not be clearly heard on the audio. Commissioner Amy Goold communicated whomever decides to be on the Sub-Committee from the Commission will then need to have a meeting to decide on how to do the outreach. Commissioner Jorgenson-Owen brought up we still would need to be working with

Director Farline and Office Manager Nikki Duhamel, because this Sub-Committee is still under the umbrella of Parks & Recreation. Director Farline said when there is three commissioners interested in serving on the Sub-Committee himself and Mrs. Duhamel will be able to give them time frames and what the goal of the Sub-Committee will be. Citizen Ken Lares spoke again to the Commissioners and feels like things are going in the right direction. Commissioner Carter asked about a doodle pull, and to have a meeting set up in the next few days. Commissioner Jorgenson-Owen don't feel the need for a doodle pull due to Director Farline and Office Manager Duhamel communicating so well. Commissioner Carter asked if they could discuss a potential date for the first Sub-Committee meeting after the Commission meeting. Commissioner Amy Goold agreed to do that. Commissioner Rush spoke but again was unable to hear him on the audio. Director Farline suggested January 2021 for the first meeting because of the holidays and people traveling. Director Farline indicated that sometime in the next week he will reach out for setting a date. Commissioner Amy Goold asked about the time length the Sub-Committee is going to operate. Director Farline stated it would be minimum of two or three years. Commissioner Sarah Jorgenson-Owen said she was fine if the Sub-Committee didn't start until January 2021.

## VI. REPORTS

### 1. [Directors Report](#)

Director Farline gave Commissioners a draft copy of the first four pages of the new programming seasonal activity guide called The Valdez Compass. The Valdez Compass will come out three times a year. Valdez Parks & Recreation is working with a company named Slate to print the guide. Director Farline bolstered that The Valdez Compass covers all of our PRCS Departments. Director Farline is really excited about the guide coming out. The guide was developed from the Master Plan survey feedback from the community. The Valdez Compass will be out for the community in January 2021. Commissioner Amy Goold thinks The Valdez Compass draft looks great so far. Commissioner Jorgenson-Owen agreed with Commissioner Goold. Commissioner Jorgenson-Owen thanked Director Farline on his efforts on making this guide happen. Director Farline thanked commission and said he will pass the feedback on to staff.

Director Farline gave the Directors Report verbally. The Disc Golf Course had its grand opening on September 3, 2020 it had a turnout of seventy participants. Parks & Recreation put on Business Trick or Treating and had over 400 participate and twenty-seven business that also all complied with Covid-19 mitigations. Director Farline stated there was 306 participants for open swim in October and in September there was 239 participants. In September all the swim lessons were filled. On the recreation side there has been some scheduling challenges for some of the indoor recreation offered. Adult Basketball is still not happening at this time due to the close nature of the sport and safety concerns with Covid-19. Director Farline said numbers are down but that is expected. Director Farline said Parks & Recreation staff are working on ways to get the Recreation Center back open safely. Parks Maintenance has winterized all the Parks. Maintenance is still waiting on enough snow to start grooming trails. Parks & Recreation is going to be doing the Tree Lighting still this year with some new twist to it to make it a safe family fun filled activity. KVAK will be broadcasting music and games during the festivities. Commissioner Carter inquired about Salmonberry Ski Hill. Director Farline filled Commissioner Carter in on what all it takes for the Salmonberry Ski Hill to open and why. Commissioner Teale mentioned that he seen the driveway getting plowed to the Salmonberry Ski Hill. Commissioners discussed the current snow accumulations that have been received so far.

**VII. COMMISSION BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR**

There was no Commission business from the floor

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business Commissioner Amy Goold adjourned the Regular Parks & Recreation Commission meeting at 8:28pm