



## PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES

November 4, 2025 at 5:30 PM

Assembly Chambers/Zoom Webinar

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### A. CALL TO ORDER

PRAC Chair Ryan O'Shaughnessy called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.

### B. ROLL CALL

**Present:** Ryan O'Shaughnessy, Josh Anderson, Jennifer Gross, Paulette Schirmer, Ren Scott & Danika Swanson

**Absent:** Susan Crandall, Emma Van Nes, & Kaasáank' Andrew Williams

**Staff Present:** Marc Wheeler, Parks & Recreation Director; Lauren Verrelli, Parks & Recreation Deputy Director; Dan Bleidorn, CBJ Lands and Resources Manager; John King, CBJ Lands and Resources Deputy Lands Manager; Christine Woll, Assembly Liaison; & Annie Carroll, Parks & Recreation Staff Liaison

### C. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

**MOTION** by Ms. Schirmer to approve the agenda and ask for unanimous consent. *Seeing no objections, the agenda was approved.*

#### 1. November 4 Agenda Overview

### D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

#### 2. Minutes from October 7, 2025

**MOTION** by Mr. Anderson to approve the minutes from October 7, 2025, and ask for unanimous consent. *No objections were heard, and the minutes were approved.*

### E. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

**Carole Bookless**, a Douglas resident, began by sharing that she was a part of the South Douglas Steering Committee. She notes that when they looked at the 6<sup>th</sup> Street area, they suggested part of it should be a rural reserve, and the suggestion was not taken, as she recalls the city claimed they didn't need any more parkland. This led her to follow the PRAC's agendas, where she discovered the plan to build pickleball courts at Jackie Renninger Park. She notes that Pickleball courts are noisy and that in some places around the county, people have had to close the courts or move away due to the noise, which reaches 70 decibels. She concludes by stating that she hopes the people living on O'Day Drive have been consulted, and that she is concerned about the skateboarders whose park is being destroyed and changed.

## F. AGENDA TOPICS

### 3. PRAC Committee Member Appointments

O'Shaughnessy begins by noting that the Committee will need to appoint a chair and a vice-chair for the period of one year. He shared that he would be happy to continue serving as the PRAC chair for the next year.

**MOTION** by Ms. Schirmer to nominate Ryan O'Shaughnessy to serve as Chair of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee for a term of one year and ask for unanimous consent. *No objections were heard, and the motion passed.*

Mr. O'Shaughnessy continued by noting that Mr. Anderson has been serving as the Vice Chair for the last year and longer, and as the most tenured member of the PRAC, he is well-suited to fill the role.

**MOTION** by Mr. O'Shaughnessy to nominate Josh Anderson to serve as Vice-Chair of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee for a term of one year and ask for unanimous consent. *No objections were heard, and the motion passed.*

### 4. Alaska's Capital Inn Bed & Breakfast requests to purchase CBJ parkland

Ms. Verrelli introduces John King, CBJ Deputy Lands Manager, who will be presenting on the request to purchase parkland that the Lands & Resources department received. Mr. King shares that the property owner of Block 20 Lot 6, Mark Thorson, has applied to purchase a portion of Parkland at Block 20 Lot 7, located adjacent to his property. An Accessory bedroom was built on a preexisting encroachment into the park's property without a permit, and the CBJ Community Development Department flagged the issue. Mr. Thorson was given the options to apply to purchase the sliver of parkland occupied by the bedroom, or remove the encroaching structure.

Mr. King explains the history of the encroachment, sharing that a 15-year agreement was authorized in the year 2000, allowing an existing retaining wall and fence to be on Block 20 Lot 7. CBJ purchased the property in 2002 and honored the existing agreement until it expired in 2015. The original 15-year period was intended to allow for the normal useful life of the encroaching structure before significant repairs were needed; however, the structure has since been added to and converted into an accessory bedroom.

Ms. Schirmer asks if the building is structurally sound, to which Mr. King answered that they are uncertain, as it was built without a permit, and Mr. Thorson applied for the permit after construction.

Mr. O'Shaughnessy notes that the 2019 Parks & Recreation Master Plan generally takes a position against disposing of parkland. He asks if there is any precedent for the disposal of parkland due to an encroachment. Dan Bleidorn, CBJ Lands and Resources Manager, answers that yes, disposal has happened. He notes that Alaska Power & Telephone previously purchased a sliver of parkland for a fiber optic utility cable, and there was a previous disposal of a pocket park in downtown Juneau.

Ms. Swanson clarifies that the previous encroachments were considered temporary, and the 15-year term was intended to cover the useful life of the deck before major repairs were needed. She asks if the landowner of Lot 6 at the time of the 2000 agreement is the same now, and if the property is currently for sale, to which Mr. King confirms both are true.

Mr. Anderson asks if setbacks are included in the survey data, to which Mr. King says they are not and if the request is denied, the owner would have to remove the structure to the property line, potentially factoring in setbacks. Mr. King shares that he was informed a new survey has been completed, though staff have not had time to review it. He says that the application requests 3 feet of land, and the survey from the year 2000 shows the old fence running 3.5 feet into Lot 7.

Mr. O'Shaughnessy opens for public comment on the topic before the PRAC comes to its final decision and invites Ms. Bookless back up to speak.

**Carole Bookless** states her opinion that this is an egregious case, as the initial work and subsequent permanent construction of a bedroom were both done without a permit on the encroached land. She suggests the alternative that instead of purchasing the parkland, they should be offered a land trade for part of lot 6.

Ms. Gross asks if it is possible to rent/lease the land instead of purchasing it, or if a land trade would be feasible. Mr. King answers that a lease would be complicated, as there is no standard way to issue a lease for a structure that crosses a property line. He also notes that the property along the park appears built up, making it unclear where available trade land exists on the applicant's property.

**MOTION** by Mr. Anderson for the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee to recommend that the Assembly deny the applicant's request to purchase CBJ parkland property at Block 20 Lot 7. *No objections were heard, and the motion passed.*

##### 5. **AT&T Cell Tower at Dimond Park**

Mr. Bleidorn presents to the PRAC the proposal from AT&T requesting to lease property within Diamond Park to establish a communications tower. He notes that AT&T's initial proposal was to lease property near Park's & Rec's valley shop; however, it was denied as it conflicts with long-term plans for the property. AT&T submitted a revised proposal to replace an existing light pole within the park with a larger, taller light pole that would house the communication equipment and build a small fenced-in equipment area nearby. Parks and Lands staff viewed this revised proposal more favorably as it incorporated equipment into existing infrastructure, reducing the visual and physical footprint.

After the presentation, Mr. O'Shaughnessy opens for public comment on the topic before the PRAC makes its decision, and invites Ms. Bookless back up to speak.

**Carole Bookless** says that she is happy that this proposal would improve cell service in the valley, but upon further research, she has concerns about the tower's location. She is concerned about the electromagnetic waves, and shares that some recommend these

towers not be built within 500 feet of schools, or places people spend a great deal of time, as they may be harmful.

Mr. Anderson attests from personal experience that the radio frequency waves are generally quite safe, and those who work near them are equipped with meters to monitor the electromagnetic waves, which only beep within a few feet of the antennas. He concludes that city codes and regulations should be followed, but general worry about safety is unnecessary.

Ms. Schirmer asks what the distance is between the schools and the proposed pole, to which Ms. Verrelli estimated the Elementary School is 400 feet away, the library is 550 feet, the field house is 700 feet, and the middle school is 800 feet.

Mr. Anderson asked if the city had discussed the lease amount, to which Mr. Bleidorn answered that they had not. First, they will need the PRAC's recommendation, and if approved, the Assembly would grant authority to negotiate terms, including requiring AT&T to conduct an appraisal to determine the rate.

Mr. O'Shaughnessy asks if there are similar CBJ leases and what the amount is for them. Mr. Bleidorn answers that the city has several full communications tower leases (e.g., Fish Creek Road, Lena Point, Food Bank, Douglas Reservoir). This is the first application for equipment integrated into a light pole, making it unique. Lease rates generally hover around \$1,000 per month.

Ms. Swanson asks if there were any issues or sticking points in past Communication tower agreements. Mr. Bleidorn answers that they have gone smoothly in the past. He recalls one sticking point in a previous case near a reservoir that involved requiring breakpoint technology in the lease agreement, ensuring that if the tower were to fall, it would break and fall within the radius of the leased area to prevent damage to the nearby reservoir.

Ms. Gross asks if this tower will improve service at the Dimond Park Field House, to which Mr. Bleidorn answers that yes, AT&T identified this as a necessary location to improve coverage in Mendenhall Valley, where there are known service issues.

Mr. Anderson asks about the co-location and if it is financially beneficial for the city, citing concerns that the company that builds the tower, AT&T in this case, controls the structure and may intentionally discourage other carriers from co-locating to lock in a cheap initial rate. Mr. Bleidorn answers that the city code demands co-location, and the Initial base rate is by appraisal, plus an adjustment for every co-location. He claims it's beneficial for CBJ, and they will strongly recommend against any other towers in the area if this one is approved, reinforcing the pressure for co-location.

Ms. Gross asks what control AT&T will have over the lease area, to which Mr. Bleidorn answers that AT&T controls the fenced-in, 16 ft x 36 ft area, which houses the electrical and technical equipment, making it inaccessible to the public. The city remains responsible for the light pole itself and for maintaining and changing light bulbs.

**Motion:** by Mr. Anderson for the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee to recommend that the Assembly authorize the City Manager to approve the proposed AT&T lease at Dimond Park for a 110-foot replacement light pole and associated equipment area. *No objections were heard, and the motion passed.*

## 6. **Floyd Dryden Outdoor Pickleball Courts Update**

Ms. Verrelli introduces the topic to the PRAC, reminding them that the original design presented at the September meeting with four dedicated pickleball courts drew concerns from the pickleball community due to safety issues resulting from only 4 feet of spacing between the courts. To address safety, staff developed Option B, which would provide two dedicated pickleball courts and two shared pickleball courts on one existing tennis court. She highlights that the tennis community would retain two shared courts at Floyd Dryden. Ms. Verrelli notes that the improvements would be temporary as the plan is to revert the space to dedicated tennis courts once the new facilities at Jackie Renninger Park are completed, though the timeline for that project is currently uncertain.

**Carole Bookless** speaks to her concerns about the tennis community losing their courts with upcoming changes to the Floyd Dryden and Jackie Renninger parks. She acknowledges that pickleball is supposedly a really good sport for seniors, but her orthopedic surgeon says that is not the case, as there are many injuries. She highlights the importance of tennis as a long-time Olympic sport for which people earn scholarships. She says she knows pickleball is popular and growing, but believes that what the department is proposing is going overboard.

Ms. Verrelli clarifies that the reconfiguration of the Floyd Dryden courts is temporary, and addresses Ms. Bookless' earlier concerns about the skate park, sharing that there will still be a space there for skateboarders; it is simply being redesigned.

**Kueni Maake**, a valley resident, commended the move to improve safety. Suggested trying to add more shared courts on the basketball court side to reach six total courts for tournaments. She confirms that her preferred option is B, out of the two that are under consideration, because it will be safer.

**Melehoko Ma'ake**, a valley resident, agrees with Kueni Maake in supporting option B for the courts. She requests that providing more courts on the basketball side would create the opportunity for dedicated courts for senior citizens to play, as the sport is rapidly growing.

**Mike Notar**, A valley resident, shares that he also favors option B and requests that staff include a separation/barrier between the two dedicated pickleball courts to prevent chasing balls and reduce injury risk.

Ms. Verrelli makes her final comments, sharing that a court reservation system will be implemented after the resurfacing to gather user data and manage usage. She also notes that a movable barrier/net between the two dedicated pickleball courts could potentially be added after the resurfacing work.

**MOTION** by Ms. Schirmer for the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee to recommend that the Department proceed with Option B for the Floyd Dryden court improvements. *No objections were heard, and the motion passed.*

**G. STAFF REPORTS**

**H. COMMITTEE MEMBER / LIAISON COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS**

**Mr. Wheeler** formally introduces himself as the new Director of Parks and Recreation, noting that it is only his second day on the job. He thanks staff, especially Ms. Varelli, for pulling double duty in leading the department during the transition.

**Ms. Woll** introduces herself as the new Assembly Liaison to PRAC. She reports that the Assembly approved the final fund transfer for the Marine Park project, which is now fully funded and ready for implementation. She noted that the primary focus of the Assembly is the upcoming budget due to anticipated significant cuts following the recent ballot initiative results. She also notes that the PRAC may be interested in the Telephone Hill plan, which has been under discussion, as green space is a prioritized asset in conceptual designs, but the parcels are primarily intended for private development.

**Ms. Schirmer** reports that the Lands, Housing, and Economic Development Committee met and discussed planning for the Downtown Waterfront District and an update on Affordable Housing. She notes the AT&T and encroachment items were presented to LHED as informational items.

**Mr. Anderson** reports that the Youth Activities Board held a retreat; however, there are no further updates as of now. He also comments on how he enjoys the PRAC's process, noting that members granted each other enough grace to ask lots of questions to ensure they were well-informed before making motions.

**I. NEXT MEETING DATE - DECEMBER 2, 2025 - December 2, 2025**

**J. ADJOURNMENT** With no further business to discuss, the committee adjourned at 6:47 pm

*Respectfully submitted by Annie Carroll on 11/26/2025, approved at the 12/02/2025 meeting.*