

MINUTES
PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, December 5th, 2017
City Hall Chambers– 6 p.m.

I. Call to Order at 6:01 p.m. – C. Mertl, Chair

Present: J. Anderson, E. Carrillo, B. Farrell, T. Gilmour, C. Mertl, C. Prussing, T. Rutecki

Absent: E. Ouderkirk, G. Schaaf

Staff Present: Kirk Duncan, P&R Director; Lauren Verrelli, Staff Liaison; Allison Eddins, CDD Planner

II. Agenda Changes – Approved.

III. Public Participation of Non-Agenda Items – None.

IV. Approval of Meeting Minutes from November 7th, 2017 – B. Farrell moves to approve the minutes, no objection. *Minutes adopted.*

V. New Business –

A. Commercial Use Fees:

K. Duncan: I'm recommending we change our commercial use fee structure to a simple \$3.50 per person that uses our trails. We currently have 4 companies that use our trails and they will be notified and have time to comment. These recommendations won't go into effect until Summer of 2019.

C. Mertl: \$5 fee seems to be the average minimum that most communities/agencies are charging for trail use. I think we're undervaluing our trails.

K. Duncan: Once the Master Planning process is complete, we will be developing a Fees & Charges Policy. To increase it greatly at this point of time wouldn't be wise. We need to stabilize what we currently have to make it easy to administer and then come forward with a plan for why we charge what we charge.

B. Alaska Canopy Adventures –

K. Duncan: Alaska Canopy Adventures (ACA) has an economic desire to reduce their cost by eliminating boat operation and instead, using coaches to shuttle zipline patrons to Savikko Park. The packet indicates St. Ann's as the drop off but that has been changed. ACA received a Conditional Use permit in 2005 stating they could only boat over patrons to their zipline. Unaware of the Conditional Use permit stipulating boat only access to the zipline, in 2014 Parks & Rec issued a commercial use permit to ACA for trail use for up to 500 people for the summer. ACA only uses that permit if they have problems operating their boats due to weather or mechanical issues. ACA is requesting an increase of trail use for a maximum of 10 groups of 18 people per day. In 2004 the Trails Working Group (TWG) recommended no more than 4 groups of 15 people per day, be off the trail by 5pm and only one weekend day. I was under the impression that these recommendations were not adopted by the Assembly but I learned yesterday that they were. I reached out to the Law Dept. to see if these are regulations or recommendations. They stated that these regulations have some flexibility and are there to guide the permit decision making process. We would need to alter the regulations to some degree. As the P&R Director, from a trails standpoint, having 180 people use the trail and restrooms will not overwhelm them. I don't think this is an infrastructure problem but this is a social issue. Do we want to increase the amount of tourist using Savikko Park and the Treadwell

Historic District Trail? What we're doing tonight is making a recommendation to the Planning commission on how they should proceed with the amendments to the Conditional Use permit.

A. Eddins: The Planning Commission at their January 9th meeting will be looking at whether or not to amend the condition from their original Conditional Use permit that says guests and employees of ACA can only access the site via boat. In 2005, there was no discussion on what would happen if a boat broke down. Access to the site was never addressed at any length because it was ACA's intent all along to offer guests a trip on a boat; it was built into their business model.

E. Carrillo: Has ACA gone out to discuss this with the Douglas community?

A. Eddins: They met with the Treadwell Historic Preservation Society (THPS); additionally we held a neighborhood meeting in October. THPS did submit a letter in support of their proposal in the sense they will be exposing more guests to the history of the area.

T. Rutecki: Does the Department have a recommendation on this issue?

K. Duncan: Not at this time. We would like to hear what the public has to say. Our PlaceSpeak poll indicates opposition to this (70% against; 30% for).

C. Merti: If they're not going to be using St. Ann's where will they be parking their vehicles?

K. Duncan: The only parking of vehicles will be at Treadwell Ice Arena for ACA employees. The coaches will drop off by the restrooms; they will drop off one group and pick up another group. Technically, they won't be parking.

T. Gilmour: This will solely be walking in and out; no use of motorized vehicles on the trail?

K. Duncan: That is correct; this is not a tour that caters to people with physical disabilities. In addition, anyone who wants to use a motorized vehicle in a park, that is specifically excluded by ordinance.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ACA

Mark Halsted (400 St. Ann's): This whole process needs to be restarted, everything has changed. You reach out to all the residents on St. Ann's but what about everyone that utilizes Sandy Beach? You need to address a new user group, a lot of the people that are here are residents of St. Ann's and now you're telling us that's off the table. ACA's proposal is misleading since St. Ann's is still within their application. They want to change their business plan to economically benefit them; eventually this will lead to restrictions on locals.

A. Eddins: To follow up on a few things, the applicant did originally want to use St. Ann's to access the trail, we immediately reached out to the Streets Department and their Director said that St. Ann's is not a doable option. We communicated that to the applicant and we have not received a new application but we are all in agreement that St. Ann's is off the table. It will be a condition within their Conditional Use permit that they are not allowed to use St. Ann's. To clarify, they have had three conditional use permits.

Laura Haywood (709 St Ann's): I want to thank ACA for being good neighbors, they have always been friendly. I'm worried about the increased usage impacts— dog and tourist interactions, more trash and the impact on the wildlife. A more reasonable thing to do is try smaller increase to see what happens. If there is going to be an increase in traffic we need to get something from that, to enhance the area for the community.

Linda Snow (700 1st St. #12): For full disclosure, I volunteer with the THPS and we have sent in a letter and I was on the original Planning Commission when ACA originally asked for a Conditional Use permit. Personally, what troubles me is that ACA has been using a Commercial Use permit in violation of their Conditional Use permit. The first question should be can they use the trail at all, not if they can use it more. If you do decide to allow use of the trail, I would recommend sticking with the TWG recommendations. It would be nice to have a place to go without all the tourists.

Emily Walker (753 St. Ann's): I feel like we don't know what's going on here; it has been changing so many times. We're extending something that is already not allowed. Even if St. Ann's is not on the table, those buses are coming right across where St. Ann's goes. The turn down to Sandy Beach is not big and this is a place, especially during the summer months where it's busy with use by the community.

Debbie Hart (220 St. Ann's Ave): ACA was providing a tour operation that had low residential impact and it's unfortunate they're making a change. Hopefully they will explore other options. There has been a lot of misinformation and so much has been changing throughout this process, it all needs to slow down and get the public involved. Treadwell is considered a backyard community area and there is probably a big portion of Juneau that is not aware of what is happening to their favorite dog park. Kent Hart (220 St. Ann's Ave.): I'm wondering what route they're proposing to take from the parking lot to the zipline? Are they going to the trail by the shelters or going up the stairs to St. Ann's? That trail is used heavily for off leash dog walking, runners and school groups which I don't think will be compatible.

Janine Reep (1408 4th St.): This is not a tough decision but an important one. This will change the entire future of the Douglas Community, it will become just like downtown and the glacier. Why would we end our own little private area for the community? Organized tours would transform the trails, no more off leash dogs. I see in these comments in the packet that Mr. Rutecki has commented on PlaceSpeak that the Treadwell Mine Trail is dank and dark, and I'm wondering about the role of some of your membership and how you're making this decision? Are you listening to us and are you going to consider our testimony or have some of you already decided?

Jay Hubbard (1408 4th St): The numbers are deceptive; the foot traffic would be doubled with them walking out to the zipline and then back. Also, the 10-15 minute estimate to walk to the zipline is not reasonable. It doesn't matter that the busses aren't parked, they will be adding to the already congested Douglas Highway. Is the zipline business not viable anymore? Is it the public's responsibility to make their business profitable? The current Conditional Use permit is effective on limiting this impact on Douglas.

Katie Joka (1311 Tarn Ct.): I am representing the Montessori School; I am the Executive Director there. Our Board of Directors has submitted their public comment and we're against ACA's proposal. We represent 52 students, from 15 months to 6 years of age and we're a 12 month school. There is also another childcare center on St. Ann's and they have 8 students. So there are 60 kids who use that area pretty regularly. Our main concerns are pick-up and drop-off by the turn and our kids groups use the trails weekly.

Mark Luchini (739 St. Ann's): Savikko is not a commercial area. The tourists are going to encroach on the shelters and restrooms in the rain. The last thing anyone wants is to change the off leash dog area. There are logistics that need to be worked out.

John DelGado (1300 1st St.): I'm in opposition of ACA's proposal. I do feel that Mr. Rutecki needs to recuse himself. I applaud the efforts of ACA to make this work but they're losing an exciting aspect to their current tour operation by eliminating the boats.

Carol Colle (715 St. Ann's): I want to thank ACA for being a good neighbor; currently they are having minimal impact on Douglas. I have some concerns with the size and number of departures, it's too much too fast. The other thing that has changed that has concerned me, originally they said they were going to be using vans and now they're saying coaches. If it's going to be big tour buses, we don't have the road infrastructure for that.

Jeff White (305 St. Ann's): This whole process has been too rushed, as you can see, many people here tonight are from St. Ann's and it has been sold as a St. Ann's proposal. That is not the case now. It needs to go back out and tell all of Juneau that this is about Savikko Park. I originally supported this project back in 2005; I thought it was a good, low impact tourism venture. I cannot support it now for multiple reasons. The THRS does not represent the people of Douglas or the community, they're a special interest. I encourage this process to be restarted.

End public comment.

Tory Korn (ACA): I'm glad to hear we're perceived as a good neighbor. I love seeing all the passion from the community and neighborhood. Times have changed, demand has decreased and the boats are a high risk variable. The boats are also the highest risk portion of our tour when we unload people at the front onto the beach. The group size is a issue; we do 18's right now since that's what a boat can carry but we are not married to that number. Our average group size is about 6-8 people; looking

at this past season of a little under 5,000 people and we actually have an average of 40-45 people per day. We have days above that and days below that, Monday and Tuesdays tend to be our busiest days. We would be committed to cleaning up and upgrading the trails. We don't intend to use coach buses, but plan to use 14 passenger vans.

T. Gilmour: My biggest concern is how the tourists are going to handle dogs off leash in that area and that it will become a leashed area considering tourists over locals.

T. Korn: Prior to departure time we can address it with them, let them know we're going through a non-leash law area.

C. Mertl: What is the exact route you would take once you drop off your patrons?

T. Korn: We would take the path next to the restrooms and continue along the lower trail until it hooks up with the top trail.

C. Mertl: When do you need to have an answer for next year's season?

T. Korn: If we don't know by January 9th, even if it's approved by this point, we would run a type of hybrid for the year, a mixture between the boats and shuttles. We are prepared to operate as is.
Board discussion on ACA proposal.

C. Mertl: How does PRAC fit into this process? Whose permit trumps whose?

K. Duncan: This is the Department's public process. We have been working with ACA and CDD to pull this all together. The Conditional Use permit trumps the Commercial Use permit. As of today, the Commercial Use permit is now void.

C. Prussing: I would like to make a motion that the PRAC recommends that Alaska Canopy Adventures maintain their original Conditional Use permit and not be approved for any modification that would allow motor vehicle access to Savikko Park and pedestrian access on the trails.

All ayes. Motion Passes.

VI. Unfinished Business –

A. Turf Field Proposal:

K. Duncan: Update on Larry Johansen's inquiry about potentially leasing fields to his organization. While no promises are made at this time, the Department will continue to work with him on ways to assist in securing funding for turfing of fields.

B. Knotweed:

K. Duncan: The Law Dept. suggests we proceed slowly and carefully with any knotweed eradication program as there are liability issues to be considered. We will continue on at Twin Lakes.

C. Eagle Valley Center – CBJ Finance Committee:

K. Duncan: We informed the Finance Committee of what we're doing, basically a break even operation at EVC. Kristi West has gone from a temporary employee to a part time limited employee.

VII. Director's Report – K. Duncan

A. Montana Creek Nordic Bridge Crossing:

K. Duncan: The Nordic Club, Trail Mix and Park Maintenance worked to widen the bridge at Montana Creek at the end of the road. The wider bridge makes grooming an easier operation.

B. Parks & Rec Division Updates:

K. Duncan: Gave updates on P&R divisions.

VIII. Committee, Liaison, and Board Member Reports

A. Chair Report— As a PRAC member and a member of the public, please be aware of the amount of politicking you're doing outside. It deteriorates our effectiveness and our ability to operate as an advisory committee.

B. Liaison to the Assembly Report— None.

C. Liaison Reports—

YAAB – T. Rutecki: Board is getting filled. Formed a committee to come up with a scoring criteria for grants.

Aquatics – T. Rutecki: Met with the COW on the four options about the board.

Jensen-Olson Arboretum—T. Gilmour: Construction on parking lot and sunroom.

Lands – C. Mertl: Still discussing land transfer at Indian Cove.

1% for Art— J. Anderson: None.

Treadwell Arena Board – E. Carrillo: None.

JNU Urban Forestry – C. Mertl: None.

Eaglecrest – E. Carrillo: None.

TrailMix—B. Farrell: None.

Park Foundation— C. Mertl: None.

Other Member Business – C. Mertl: Project Playground has public meetings coming up.

Adjournment – 8:33 p.m. *Having no other business before the board.*

Respectfully submitted by Lauren Verrelli, P&R Administrative Assistant II, 12/20/2017