

FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH  
Chena Riverfront Commission  
July 28, 2021  
12:02 p.m.

A regular meeting of the Chena Riverfront Commission was held Wednesday, July 28, 2021, in the Mona Lisa Drexler Assembly Chambers of the Juanita Helms Administration Center, 907 Terminal Street, Fairbanks, Alaska.

**ROLL CALL**

There were present appearing in-person and telephonically:

Diana Campbell	Brenda Naaktgeboren	Robert Henszey
Julie Jones	Wade Binkley	Lee Wood
Annette Freiburger, Vice-Chairperson		Buki Wright, Chairperson

Comprising a quorum of the Board/Commission, and

Sharon Wittenkeller, Administrative Assistant III Clerk  
April Trickey, CMC, Borough Clerk  
Kellen Spillman, Acting Community Planning Director Ex-Officio Member  
David Bredlie, Public Works Director Ex-Officio Member  
John Netardus, DOT&PF Representative Ex-Officio Member  
Jackson Fox, FAST Planning Liaison

Absent & Excused

Gregory Barker

**MESSAGES**

C.1. Communications to the Chena Riverfront Commission

Kellen Spillman, Acting Community Planning Director, provided an update on new clerking functions for FNSB Boards and Commissions, Chena Riverfront Commission hybrid meeting format, participation options and schedule, Community Planning staff vacancies and promotions, an application for a new Chena Riverfront Commissioner, and status of the Downtown Plan. He thanked Laura Melotte for her 6 years of clerking service for the Chena Riverfront Commission, and also thanked Commissioner Freiburger for representing the Chena Riverfront Commission at the Alaska Railroad Corporation Board meeting.

2.a. Citizen's Comments on agenda items not scheduled for public hearing.

NONE

2.b. Citizen's Comments on items other than those appearing on the agenda.

Jackson Fox, FAST Planning Executive Director spoke of requests for bridge signage at the Noyes Slough and Chena River bridges. He explained FAST Planning staff have been pursuing funding to purchase and install the signs and requested the topic as a future agenda item before the Chena Riverfront Commission.

2. Disclosure & Statement of Conflict of Interest

NONE

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA**

HENSZEY,  
Seconded by WOOD

moved to approve the agenda and consent  
agenda as read.

VOTE ON MOTION TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA AS READ.

Yeses:

Binkley, Campbell, Jones, Henszey,  
Naaktgeboren, Wood, Freiburger, Wright

Noes:

None

MOTION CARRIED

8 Yeses, 0 Noes

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

1. Regular Meeting Minutes of May 26, 2021.

Without objection this measure was read by title and approved under the consent agenda.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

F.1. Review and discussion of current Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) projects.

John Netardus, DOT&PF Project Manager, provided updates on the following DOT&PF projects:

- Chena Riverwalk Phase III: FAST Planning received a letter from the Alaska Railroad Corporation regarding land lease options and conditions for a portion of their land that is proposed to be used in the Chena Riverwalk Phase III Project.
- Airport Way West Improvements: final PS&E completion by December 2021, Construction year 2022 project, the design study report is being revised and DOT&PF is seeking a new local planning authority, which will include presenting the project before the Chena Riverfront Commission for review.
- Cushman Street Bridge Replacement Project: final PS&E completion fall 2021, construction scheduled for spring or summer of 2022.
- University Avenue Rehab and Widening: currently under construction, the bridge is scheduled to open the end of October 2021.
- Wendell Avenue Bridge: currently under construction, the bridge is scheduled to open mid-October 2021.
- Third Street Widening Project: currently under construction, two-year project, scheduled to be completed July 1, 2022.
- Steese Bridge Redeck Project: final PS&E completion fall 2021, construction scheduled for spring or summer of 2022.
- Growden Area Accessibility Improvement Project: currently under construction, the project consists of a path east to west through Growden Park, connecting with the Chena River path.

Questions and discussion ensued.

## F.2. Status updates on Chena Riverfront Commission Project List.

Commissioner Henszey shared there were surveys conducted around Eielson Air Force Base and elodea was detected.

Chair Wright shared an update on the elodea detected in Harding Lake last year and that it was treated this summer.

Discussion ensued.

Kellen Spillman, Acting Community Planning Director, provided updates on the following Chena Riverfront Commission project list:

- Riverfront Riparian Zone Education: would like to hear an update at a future meeting on Tanana Valley Watershed Association's (TVWA) additional Watershed Resource Action Plans (WRAP), Community Planning has internally migrated the TVWA's plan for the Chena River into their GIS system.
- River Safety Signage: potential end of year funding to aid the project moving forward.

- Pioneer Park Upgrade: midway through the Pioneer Park Master Plan efforts, would like to have an update and recommendation opportunity before the Commission.
- Fairbanks Downtown Plan: update to come before the Commission.
- TVWA Update: can be looped in with the Watershed Resource Action Plan.
- FNSB Recreational Trail Plan Update: a lot of progress, robust website on the Trails Plan update, still in the public involvement process.

Discussion ensued.

### F.3. Update on the Chena Riverwalk Phase III Project

Kellen Spillman, Acting Community Planning Director, noted Resolution No. 2021-10 that the Chena Riverfront Commission recommended approval of to the Assembly was brought before to the Assembly in April, the Assembly unanimously approved the resolution.

Jackson Fox, FAST Planning Executive Director, provided an update on the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) board meeting. He noted FAST Planning is funding the Chena Riverwalk Phase III Project, there is 1.7 million dollars set aside to take the project into construction in the summer of 2022. FAST Planning is actively working on obtaining a long-term land interest from the ARRC to be able to construct a portion of the path that is on ARRC property, options and conditions were discussed between FAST Planning and the ARRC. The ARRC provided conditional approval of a land use permit to include the City of Fairbanks as the permanent owner of the foot bridge over the Chena River and the City of Fairbanks or Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) take over the maintenance responsibilities of the existing asphalt path from the footbridge up to Chena Landings Loop Road. The ARRC stated they do support the project, they also feel there is a negative impact to having the path on ARRC property, they want to be compensated, likely at fair-market value. A draft agreement including a one-time lump sum rent payment, amount to be determined, will be submitted to FAST Planning. The agreement would include a 20 to 50-year long-term land lease that would be paid upfront using federal dollars.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. Fox noted the Chena Riverfront Commission could assist with the efforts by providing a letter of recommendation to Mayor Matherly and Mayor Ward regarding responsible parties for the maintenance of the existing asphalt path from the footbridge up to Chena Landings Loop Road. This item will go before the FAST Planning Technical Committee on August 4, 2021 and the FAST Planning Policy Board, which includes all three local Mayors, on August 18, 2021.

Further discussion ensued.

Chair Wright stated he was willing to work with Mr. Fox and Mr. Spillman on drafting a letter of support for review at the next Chena Riverfront Commission meeting. Mr. Fox explained the recommendation would have to go through the Borough Assembly and Fairbanks City Council for final approval.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

G.1. Discussion of Graehl Park "Park-a-Year" preliminary concepts and planning.

This item was rescheduled for August 25, 2021.

### **EXCUSE FUTURE ABSENCES**

NONE

### **COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS**

Chair Wright noted agenda items for the next meeting; Graehl Park Discussion, and the Chena Riverwalk Phase III Project.

Commissioner Henszey thanked Laura Melotte for her role as Clerk and welcomed the new Clerk Sharon Wittenkeller, he appreciated the bridge signs project, thanked everyone for their efforts on the Chena Riverwalk Phase III project, and explained the bird vetch issue within the community.

Commissioner Campbell thanked Laura Melotte for her role as Clerk, and noted she picked bird vetch with the Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve.

Commissioner Binkley expressed interest in having more opportunities for interaction between river users and downtown Fairbanks, to build a connection between the two user groups with support of the Commission.

Chair Wright thanked Sharon Wittenkeller for being the new Clerk, thanked April Trickey for sitting in on the meeting, and requested for upcoming changes to be addressed to the Commission prior to implementation.

Kellen Spillman offered technical instruction on how to download the agenda packet online.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Chena Riverfront Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 1:34 p.m.

APPROVED: August 25, 2021