**McCarthy Area Council Meeting Minutes**

**March 31 2022, 6:30 PM, Zoom virtual meeting**

**Members present:** Nik Merlino, Erin McKinstry, Ian Gyori, Charlotte Henson, Geoff Downes, Greg Runyan, Bill Crum, Nancy Rowland, Neil Darish, Cody Simmons, Tamara Harper, Stephens Harper, Dave Hollis, Bradie Kozera, Erik Mundahl, Dave Syren, Rob Wesson, Gayle Gordon, Matt Smith, Meghan Seifert, Don Wolcott, Michelle Raven, Nate Anderson, Craig Neill, Cindy Hendel, Hannah Rowland, David Rowland, Jon Erdman, Michelle Latvala, Pete Senty, Stephanie Sever, Kelly Bay, Natalie Bay, Laurie Rowland, Keith Rowland

**Others present***:* John Becker, Cheryl Antenucci, Charlie O’Neill, Lynn Plomaritis, Livvi Lantry-Wacht, Mark Miller, Bruce Cain, Julia Chester, Chris Chester, Amanda Swinehart, Ben Swinehart, Megan Rivard, Kim Meck, Bernadette Martel, Thea Agnew Bemben, Christine Johnson, Bill McKinney, Greg Fensterman, Dodie Pruessner, Michael Trimmer, Pat Proden

President Nik Merlino opened the meeting at 6:32 PM with a quorum of 9 members present online via Zoom. Nik welcomed the new board, including the newest member Michelle Raven, and thanked former board member Christine Johnson for her years of service as well as Tamara Harper, who served as MAC Secretary for over a decade. Erin McKinstry is now serving as secretary and paid administrator. Tamara will continue as treasurer.

The 2022 board is as follows: Nik Merlino (President), Thea Agnew Bemben (Vice President), Tamara Harper (Treasurer), Erin McKinstry (Secretary), Greg Runyan, Jeremy Pataky, Stephanie Sever, John Rice, Hannah Rowland, Michelle Raven, and Greg Fensterman

A motion was made to accept the September 2021 minutes. The motion seconded and passed with no objections. The September minutes can be viewed at the MAC website [www.mxycouncil.org](http://www.mxycouncil.org/).

**DOT Meeting-Nik Merlino**

Nik summarized the Board’s meeting with DOT last October. DOT staff joined from Fairbanks and Tazlina. The Board asked for more routine maintenance on the DOT road between the east side of the Kennicott River and the Kennecott subdivision. DOT acknowledged their responsibility to maintain the road between the bridge and the end of their right-of-way.

The Board also expressed concern about culverts at Clear Creek and the swimming hole as well as the stretch of road that passes by the swimming hole outside of the DOT right-of-way. They also discussed the possible degradation of the west end of the DOT bridge/the footbridge as the Kennicott continues to move. Overall, Nik said it was a successful meeting.

Chad Helleris the new district manager for Tazlina DOT. He said DOT plans to come out this summer to look at the culverts and other work that needs to be done. Nik invited him to join future MAC meetings.

**Essential Community Infrastructure Grant (ECI)-Thea Agnew Bemben**

A new grant process was approved last summer for large projects that benefit the broader community. The program is funded by Community Assistance Funds from the State of Alaska. Grant applications and guidelines can be found online at the [MAC website](http://www.mxycouncil.org/) under "Get Involved."

$65,000 has been allocated for 2022. $40,000 of that was earmarked for the Kennicott-McCarthy Volunteer Fire Department's (KMVFD) firehall project last August, provided they submit a formal proposal by June 2022 and receive approval from the MAC Membership.The remaining $25,000 is available for large community projects this year. Applicants can present a proposal at the April, May or June membership meetings. A committee will form to review and present proposals to the membership at the July meeting, and the membership will vote on any proposals at the August meeting. Because the $40,000 was earmarked for the KMVFD last year, the Board decided that the membership vote can happen during the April meeting instead of waiting until August.

**KMVFD Proposal-Chris and Julia Chester**

The KMVFD is asking for $40,000 from the ECI grant to help build a heated firehall. The organization has also received $27,600 from the Alaska Community Foundation's Nonprofit Coronavirus Relief Fund to put toward the project. Combined grant funds would allow them to complete Phase 1 (the dirt work) and Phase 2 (the concrete slab). Chris talked to David and Kaleb Rowland about doing the work, starting in late August. The KMVFD is looking for volunteer labor for Phase 2 to help bring down the cost.

The KMVFD is still seeking funding for the building kit and installation. They have a grants committee that meets bi-monthly. Plans for the building are included in the proposal. They plan to use the building in the winter to house vehicles and equipment to provide year-round fire protection for the area. If road access is a challenge because of unplowed roads, Chris said a snow machine could respond pulling the proper equipment on a sled. He mentioned year-round protection will help people get fire insurance, and a firehall will help the KMVFD qualify for funding for new equipment as well as protect vehicles and allow for year-round maintenance.

Hannah Rowland asked about the KMVFD's plans to heat the building, particularly during very cold temperatures. Chris mentioned the possibility of Toyo stoves and various ways to prevent issues with fuel in cold temperatures, like anti gel additives.

Mike Trimmer from the Division of Forestry submitted a letter of support for the proposal. Contact Chris Chester at kmvfd@hotmail.com for questions or more information. The membership will vote on the proposal at the April meeting.

**Kennicott-McCarthy Recreation Alliance-Hannah Rowland**

Hannah read a statement about forming a new recreation nonprofit. She said the group is seeking more community members to help. Interested volunteers should contact her at 907-259-5648 or [hannahroserowland@gmail.com](mailto:hannahroserowland@gmail.com). Their goals for the year include getting 501(c)3 status, attaining ownership of the land where the playground sits, coming up with a general liability policy for the playground, hosting a recreation and outreach event and a volunteer event, finalizing the playground plan, and ordering one new piece of equipment. They are also seeking pro bono help from an attorney licensed in Alaska. Contact Jon Erdman 831-331-0034 or [jon@wrangells.org](mailto:jon@wrangells.org) if you’re willing to help. Current board members include Cheryl Antenucci, Jon Erdman and Hannah Rowland.

**McCarthy Area Roads and Access Subcommittee-Michelle Raven**

Michelle introduced the new committee, and read its mission statement: "The committee will provide a collaborative effort to assist the McCarthy Area Council in addressing access related issues or concerns by way of active research, data collection and liaising between interested entities. We will strive to establish a database of objective access information." The five members are Michelle Raven (chair), Athena Swinford, Fred Dure, Greg Fensterman and Bill Crum.

She said the committee is compiling access information for the general public. They hope to eventually put it in a binder or on the web. Stephens Harper expressed appreciation and support for the subcommittee. He asked whether it could be available on the MAC website. Michelle and Nik said the Board could discuss.

If people have community road or access concerns, they can reach out to the committee via email at michelle\_raven@yahoo.com. The committee will consider the concern, complete any relevant research or data collection and forward any recommendations to the MAC Board.

**Other committees**

MAC is looking for volunteers for three subcommittees: an outhouse committee, a maintenance and repairs committee, and an Essential Community Infrastructure grant committee. For more information, you can reach out to the MAC Secretary at [mccarthyareacouncil.secretary@gmail.com](mailto:mccarthyareacouncil.secretary@gmail.com).

**West side road maintenance report, new proposal and vehicle bridge update-Keith Rowland**

Keith gave a report for their 2021 West Side Road Maintenance project. They completed two summer bladings and five winter plowings, two more plowings than they’d planned because of all the snow. They covered the extra cost with additional contributions from individuals. MAC contributed $1920, and over 20 individuals covered the remaining cost, more than they've ever had contribute, Keith said.

He also presented their 2022 McCarthy Access and West Side Road Maintenance Proposal. He said the maintenance includes the access roads to and from the vehicle bridge in addition to the road from the end of John Adams airstrip to the Welty's. Most of their contributions come from individuals living on the west side, but he said that anyone who uses the vehicle bridge benefits. The proposal is for two summer bladings and three winter plowings. The price increased slightly from last year to $4,320 total. They're requesting $2,160 from MAC, half the cost, and will raise the other half from individual contributions. The membership will vote on the proposal at the April meeting.

Kim Meck asked for clarity on the process for funding road projects like this and whether the extra funding goes toward lowering the price of vehicle bridge access**.** Keith clarified that the vehicle bridge is owned by a different company, Bridges, which is owned by Keith and Laurie Rowland. He said many of the roads in the area are community roads owned by different state entities, but the state isn’t responsible for their maintenance. He said one of the primary uses of community funds is for road maintenance, and using the MAC Small Grant process allows them to combine public funds with private contributions. Tamara and Nik added that anyone can make a proposal for road maintenance and/or improvement on roads that benefit the community and aren’t maintained by DOT. Funding guidelines and the application are posted at the mail shack and on the [MAC website](http://mxycouncil.org/) under “Get Involved.”

Keith addressed the two closures of the vehicle bridge over the Kennicott River this spring. He said one of the piers had raised about 6 inches and another about 18 inches because the hollow piers were generating permafrost and pushing up out of the river bed. He put in temporary supports, dug out the two piers and the permafrost, and reset the piers lower. He's also going to fill them with foam or sand to mitigate the problem in the future.

Chris Chester thanked the Rowlands for their continued road maintenance on the west side.

**Copper Valley Chamber of Commerce- Nik Merlino and Bruce Cain**

The Chamber is planning an overnight visit on May 26. Meg Jensen and Laura Boniek are coordinating the event with local businesses. For questions or for more information, you can reach out to the Chamber at 907-822-5555 or chamber@cvinternet.net. The Chamber's secretary Bruce Cain said they're looking forward to the event. They hosted a similar event a few years ago. Visitor’s center staff will be in attendance in addition to Board members.

**Future meeting formats-Nik Merlino**

Nik said the board is still discussing when we'll have the first in-person meeting of the year, but he anticipates it will happen soon. He's hoping to keep a virtual option available, even as we transition to in-person meetings. Hybrid meetings present technical challenges, and the board has discussed different ideas, including allowing people to listen into the meeting from Zoom. Anyone with suggestions or experience running hybrid meetings can reach out to the MAC Secretary.

**2023 Community Assistance Grant-Tamara Harper**

Tamara is filling out our annual application for state funds through the Community Assistance Fund. She anticipates us receiving around $25,000, which is what we've received in the past. She said our population was increased to 109 after the last census, but that hasn’t changed our revenue amount. Tamara plans to call the state to ask if it will increase the amount in the future.

The application is simple and generally allocates how we'll spend the fund, but actual spending depends on what sorts of projects apply for and receive funding through MAC's grant proposal process. She made a motion to approve the following:

-General Administration $10,000

-Road Maintenance $5,000

-Public Safety $5,000

-Fire $5,000

Michelle Raven seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

**Announcements**

Erin mentioned that MAC is looking for outhouse cleaners and individuals available for small repair and maintenance projects this summer. Contact the MAC Secretary for more information.

Mike Trimmer from the Division of Forestry mentioned that we’re about to enter phase two of the community wildfire protection plan update in McCarthy and Kennecott. He’ll have a more detailed update about that and another program at the April meeting.

The next meeting is Thursday, April 28 at 6:30 PM. Location is TBD.

(Not announced at meeting) Techno Metal Post Alaska LLC is scheduling a trip to McCarthy this summer. They install helical piers for houses, decks, etc. in lieu of concrete. They’ve done some work in McCarthy in the past. Anyone interested can contact David Northup at 907-299-3334 or [dave@tmpalaska.com](mailto:dave@tmpalaska.com). He reached out to the MAC Secretary via email to inform the community.

**Treasury Report—Tamara Harper (not read during meeting)**

Financial activity since the September 2021 meeting:

Checking account balance:  $23,388

Savings account balance:  $96,977

5 CDs balance:  $138,474

                        Deposits:         $1,103                all interest

                                                $255                   dues

                        Expenses:       $249                   2021 office/outhouse cleaning supplies

                                                $3,750                2021 Administrator payment--T.Harper

                                                $474                   Cares Act operations support--MXY EMS

                                                $2,400                2020 small grants operations support--MXY EMS

                                                $237                   Wix website fees

                                                $105                   Zoom fees

                                                $46                     stamps

                                                $400                   Tony's/EMS snowplowing--Rowcon

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting. The motion seconded and passed with no objections. President Nik Merlino adjourned the meeting at 7:40 PM.

Minutes taken by Erin McKinstry, Recording Secretary.

mccarthyareacouncil.secretary@gmail.com