



Citizen Advisory Committee Meeting #16

Location: Rabbit Creek Community Church Auditorium

Date: November 26, 2007 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm

AGENDA

1. Introduction – agenda review, introductions of CAC, consultants, guests, public attendees; confirm Dec 17th meeting; (John Reese - chair) (10 minutes)

CAC

- Chris Hamre
- Lori Davey
- John Reese
- John Weddleton
- David Lappi
- Wayne Westberg
- Carol Fries
- David Black, MWH
- Dave Coolidge, LCG
- Glen Foust, LCG
- Kristi Bischofberger, MOA Watershed Management
- Dan Roth, MOA Onsite
- Mel Langdon, PM&E Watershed
- Bob Butera, HDR
- JoAnn Contreras, MOA Planning
- Tom Nelson, MOA Planning

Staff

- Lance Wilber, MOA Traffic
- John McPherson, HDR
- Heather Stewart, Agnew::Beck
- Bob Miller

Public

2. Continuation (if needed) of discussion of options to pay for needed drainage and transportation improvements (presentation and discussion by Drainage and Transportation DCONs)
 - Guest speaker Scott Schnell from Chugiak Birchwood Eagle River Rural Road Service Area

Discussion

- Please include trails under LRSA responsibilities in road/drainage options analysis

Presentation

- CBERRSA was formed from 4 subcontracts and 5 community council areas
- They had problems prioritizing capital improvement projects, getting state grants, were too small to receive the level of service they wanted, so they formed a sub-RSA
- Service area was mostly gravel/dirt roads; not many paved roads

- Similar to the Hillside, the CBERRSA was rural, wanted to be separate, wanted local input and control, wanted a different level of service than Anchorage (and different mill rate)
- The community council areas could not solve all drainage, maintenance and road improvement problems individually
- As a sub-RSA, CBERRSA now enjoys both economic benefits (better, faster and cheaper road maintenance), and political benefits (political stature grew, influence in community, with local legislators, Assembly folks, lobbying for funding, etc.)
- The way it was originally structured, it was doomed to fail due to the way it was managed and administered (they were not realistic about what they could do; very parochial, very territorial, wanted more control than they could realistically manage)
- The Road Board approved two staff positions for administrative and operational support, enabling them to do long-range plans.
- The CBERRSA took over a lot of what the contractors did themselves: Originally contracts were administered (not directed, supervised, etc.), giving contractors a lot of control over what equipment used, what roads to sand, etc.
- All contracts were cancelled and rewritten – consolidated into one contract. With the one contract, economies of scale allowed them to ask for better, newer equipment and less equipment with lower rates. Refining the contract language was an evolving process to find the right balance of control over the contractors.
- Currently, the CBERRSA nearly entirely controls the contract work – they determine the schedule, who does what and when, and if the contractors are not performing, it can cancel and find new contractors.
- Contractors bid for work and are paid based on “time and materials.”
- Originally (1987ish): .5 mill; \$350,000 operational budget
- Originally community resented the fact that Scott and staff were not from Eagle River, but came to appreciate their impartiality over time (because they had no incentive to favor some geographic parts of the service area over others and could give recommendations for the best interests of the whole community).
- Part of the process is identifying some things they could not do – the budget only gets you so much. The community accepted this and agreed to raise the mill rate.
- Currently 1.1 mill, budget of \$3million

Discussion

- So, you and your staff are municipal employees, but you are responsible directly to the Road Board?
 - Yes. There are three of us, paid right out of CBERRSA budget
- Question about contract management
 - Contract management is a line item to pay the contractor over and above bid items
- So, basically Road Board micromanagement shifted to Municipal employees; how did this process happen?
 - It was a long process of building trust between the Road Board and the Municipality; took about 5-6 years

- To improve substandard roads, the CBERRSA voted in a CIP mill rate for capital improvements to get \$1million a year; later, the community voted in an increase for capital improvements (total mil rate of 2.1 mil). Once they had a re-occurring CIP mill rate, they could strategize with staff and plan for future improvements with a 10-year plan to improve every gravel road in the service area. It took 14 years, but the roads are all upgraded now.
- They also had to set up criteria to prioritize capital improvements
- This is in addition to state roads?
 - This is just municipal local roads
 - Once there was a 10-year plan in place, the “feeding frenzy” stopped; people were content to know their improvements would happen at some scheduled point in the future
 - They have no bond debt; done all improvements and maintenance without having to float any bonds.
 - The mill rate is now reducing, and they expect it to drop every year from here on out because it’s cheaper to maintain upgraded roads. Also, snow removal is cut in half.
- You use all subcontractors? Are they paid prevailing wage?
 - Yes all subcontractors; they bid what they bid and that’s what we pay.
 - The summer construction work done under this umbrella contract is prevailing wage
- When you first did your ballot initiative, what percentage of roads were un-maintained by anyone at that time?
 - We have 40 miles of un-maintained road/public use easements/BLM easements in the service area right now; some have no roads but are platted/dedicated, some have roads that are used, some driveways.
 - When the Road Service Area was formed, if you wanted your road to be included, you had a one-time opportunity to put it on the list; some did not – now they would have to bring their roads up to standard to get them into the RSA
 - Taxes are not always fair, but that hurdle was addressed when a single RSA was formed – it became a community thing.
- So that’s what would get people to join a district-wide RSA
- Do you have problems with new developments draining into roads? What do you do about them?
 - Yes, we have those problems; but not so much one development affecting another – more whether it’s adequately addressed within each development.
- Are you called upon to comment in the planning stage?
 - Yes, but the reality is that we don’t have enough staff to give detailed comments; we provide general comments and defer the rest to the Road Board; we also send both the Municipality and the Road Board copies of our comments, so they are getting the exact same comments
- What happens when there is a conflict between the Municipality and the Road Board?
 - That changes with administrations

- In the South Goldenview RRSA, we deal with that already; the Municipality picks the contractors.
- The contract in Eagle River is almost like a lease agreement – the Road Board has very tight control over the project; contractors have zero (or almost zero) liability beyond what they’re instructed to do by the Road Board
- Summer construction is done on a time and materials basis;
- You’re a Municipal employee, but that’s not a requirement, is it?
 - No, but whoever you have is going to be accountable to the Municipality; you’re spending municipal funds
- How was the CBERRSA formed?
 - LRSAs (formed by community council boundaries) banded together
- The Municipality gets paid for contract management, yes? That’s at whatever the prevailing billing rates are for each individual?
 - Our billing rates are not based on specific costs; we get paid a lump sum per month. We’re paid for out of the budget as administrative overhead.
 - We put the contract together, estimate hours, equipment, administrative overhead required in the contract. Contract management is a bid item, but there is a cap on it.

3. Review of drainage DCON’s approach to drainage modeling and strategies for upper Hillside drainage issues

Discussion

- In the first couple of pages, you talked about runoff – can you define what you mean by that?
 - Rainfall, snowmelt, some base flows from creeks or groundwater discharge
 - Basically, any water that would interfere with what you want to do on the surface
- Do you have Rabbit Creek and Craig Creek in the same watershed?
 - No, there is a dividing line; they’re just colored the same
- The ultimate plan is for each of the basins to come up to this level of detail (as done for Rabbit Creek)
- So the scope of work for your contract is to determine a master plan for drainage plans?
 - The drainage plan figures out runoff, what problems are out there and possible solutions.
- How specific are these plans going to be?
 - Pretty detailed – we’re not looking at the area on a property lot basis, but the Municipality has done a tremendous job of mapping drainage for almost the entire Hillside
- It’s got shallow groundwater? I’d be curious about how you document that.
 - It’s a work in progress; that’s what this pilot watershed plan is going to get us.
- Are the detention ponds compatible with onsite septic systems?
 - Typically, because detention ponds are their own thing, they are located in specific places because we can’t deal with runoff any other way – the detention pond would be located where it makes sense to locate it, not having any relation to

- onsite septic systems. We would be looking for a natural kettle area that has permeable soils and a natural depression, etc.
- But even if you have new development standards for new subdivisions requiring them to keep all water onsite, the fact that that water has nowhere to go would necessitate city water and sewer because it would probably create water quality and saturation problems in the subdivisions
 - Right now, we're just trying to limit/hold back the water to some manageable level. If we can't manage the water, we'll move to detention ponds, etc.
 - So, if basins won't hold it, you route it to a creek, and if the creek won't hold it you use pipes?
 - Yes, pipes are in the tool bag, but we're avoiding using them. In other parts of Anchorage, there's no question about using pipes, but on the Hillside we're trying to avoid them. Pipes also have to be maintained, so that's another cost that has to be considered.
 - Onsite versus piped water and sewer depends on the existing conditions and whether they can handle the water flow.
- Changing 50% of area from natural vegetation to lawns increased water flow by 85% to 200% in different areas (variation due to sub-basins)
 - What would be onerous about requiring 100% of the roof to drain to pervious surfaces? When you live here you come to understand you don't want your house draining to your driveway because your driveway turns into a sheet of ice in the winter.
 - Grates don't work well?
 - Only with paved surfaces, not with gravel
 - What happens in the winter when your "pervious" areas are frozen up and not so pervious; how do you deal with this?
 - Snowmelt is easy because it's gradual and has time to percolate.
 - The CAC agrees that the recommended required percents of native vegetation are too small, as are percents drained to pervious surfaces
 - When you get to where you're saturating the soil underneath and/or near roads, are you just damaging the roads at that point?
 - If you have substandard roads, yes. But having a ditch next to the roads probably won't make it much worse than it already is on the Hillside.
 - South Goldenview uses rap (recycled asphalt) to line culverts; then they try to pitch the culverts to keep the water moving
 - Site grading – when we talk about terracing, there is a concern that when you start altering the contours of the site, you alter the shallow groundwater (surface water) flow, which can have significant impacts
 - We're thinking to try to educate people about site grading so that doesn't occur.
 - Problem- when you dig the ditch, it retains less heat and freezes faster – would putting peat or something in there to help insulate it make it work better? Would plowing snow into it all winter also insulate it?
 - Could you have a drainage service area with fees based on impervious surfaces?
 - Yes, the funding mechanism we looked at allows for that sort of thing
 - Is Rabbit Creek Heights part of the Rabbit Creek watershed? How far along are you?

- Yes, Rabbit Creek Heights is part of the Rabbit Creek watershed
- We're about to start some test runs
- We could convene a subcommittee to look at specific concerns
- Right now, building contractors are doing everything they can possibly do to get the water off their lots so they can develop those lots. The more we retain water on our lots, the more we're going to have water saturation and the more likely we're going to have to go to sewer (Dan Roth)

4. Update on "5 of 9" and related nitrate issues

Discussion

- There is opportunity for improvement in the process of how public wells are managed. Nothing is analyzed until it reaches "10" – if there is a statistically significant trend for specific wells, the Municipality should be aware of that so as to deal pro-actively with well maintenance.
- Do you (Larsen) see anything inaccurate in what Lori and Wayne did?
 - What they did is not a substitute for the analysis done by LGC; it's not comparable.
- Do you (Larsen) believe there is a nitrate problem on the Hillside?
 - From a public health standpoint, no.
- (Dave Black) We have an upward trend in 11 wells – what is causing the upward trend? We don't know. The point is not when the wells will reach some level of public health concern, the point is why is there an upward trend at all?
 - So we should put in place some sort of process with the DEC that will allow us to check wells that show an increase
 - It's important to address what's causing these increases and see if we can't eliminate those causes and stop the trend.
 - The way the report is written, the public gets the sense that there is a nitrate problem on the Hillside that indicates contamination
- How open is the Planning Team to having the CAC help craft the language for this section?
 - We're very open to it (Dave Black and Kristi Bischofberger); we will be writing a position that the Municipality can adopt and then move forward on working out policies that would incorporate a monitoring program, additional analyses, get projects in place for wells that need new grouting, etc. In that position paper, we will clarify for the Assembly that nitrates are not a public health problem, but explain why trends are indicated in some wells.
 - Larsen wants to maintain autonomy of writing the actual report because they are trying to give an impartial, objective, scientific analysis that can stand up to public scrutiny.
 - The CAC does not want to interfere with that; they just need to be able to get the plan passed by the Assembly – not questioning the science; it's the communication that is the problem.

- Now that you've got data on 41 wells, why can't you put in the 41 wells instead of just the 9?
 - We've not been authorized to do that by the Municipality.
- Problem: in the public's mind, images and ideas are based on sound-bites; what they saw (the "5 of 9 wells") implied a red flag – it's a marketing/communication issue.
- The CAC will identify some volunteers to work on the marketing of this issue

5. Update on overall schedule and process

- District-wide issues
- Lower Hillside land use and infrastructure alternatives
- Upper Hillside land use and infrastructure alternatives

Discussion

- Done at last meeting

6. Wrap-up (5 min)

- Assignments
- Next meeting December 17, 2007 (topics: water/wastewater, commercial, lower and upper hillside land use and infrastructure alternatives)