

Seward State Parks Citizens Advisory Board

Minutes

January 9, 2018 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

AVTEC Culinary Arts Academy Banquet Room, 518 Third Ave

I. Call to Order

- A. Call to Order by Chair Griswold at 18:06
- B. Assign Minutes-taker: Mark Luttrell
- C. Roll Call: Carol Griswold, Mark Luttrell, Paul Paquette, Stephanie Wright
- D. Board members absent: Nathaniel Charbonneau, Nick Jordan
State Park Staff present: Director of State Parks Ethan Tyler
Kenai/PWS Area Superintendent Jack Blackwell
District Ranger Jack Ransom
Public members present: David Leech - Lowell Point resident
Lynda Paquette - Lowell Point resident
Terry Rude - Former Parks Ranger and CAB member
- E. Minutes Approval: December 12, 2017 Approved.
Paul Paquette moved, Luttrell seconded, unanimous.
- F. Agenda Changes and Approval: Agreed to postpone any unfinished business to next meeting. Approved unanimous.

II. Public Comments/Presentations: Lynda said she would comment later in the meeting

III. Correspondence/Public Comments relayed to Board None

IV. Reports:

- A. State Park Director, Superintendent, and Staff Report and Discussion.
 - 18:07: Blackwell and Tyler arrive.
 - Introductions.
 - Blackwell, Tyler and Ransom visited Tonsina PUC today.
 - Tyler offered his background: serving as director for 6 months, 17 years Alaska resident, lives in Girdwood, tourism and marketing background, worked for Kenai Fjords Tours for 5 years. Worked for the Alaska Community Foundation.
 - His direction of Parks: Legislature has reduced \$ to Parks. Need to increase revenue to Parks. Wants to work more closely with Chamber of Commerce and permit holders to bring more use and thus more revenue.
 - Tyler used to work for Alaska Community Foundation; was interested in creating a separate fund specific to State Parks for future donors. Would be relevant for local Parks needs.
 - Tyler grateful for CAB effort and is willing to write thank you letters to supporters.
 - Wright mentioned that the Tonsina trail is second in popularity to the NPS Harding Icefield trail. As NPS employee, she frequently refers visitors

to Tonsina, but feels like Parks is less than NPS. Suggested more visibility and a recognition of the diversity of use could create more funds.

- Tyler said Parks is not in the merchandising business. Wants a mentality shift. Parks is NOT NPS and that's great.
- \$300,000 has been provided by legislature to Parks for the construction of five Public Use Cabins (PUC) in the next five years. PUCs pay for themselves.
- Griswold noted that parks should show leadership for sustainability and conservation by building low maintenance, energy-efficient PUCs. Paquette has created a blue print for such PUCs that Parks might find useful. He described a 16x24 framed structure, half-log sided, T and G inside, super insulated. Tyler said he welcomes new ideas.
- Discussion of possible pay structure and use periods for PUCs and PUC pricing compared to other agency PUC pricing.
- Discussion of possible events and schedules in the spring to recognize the new Tonsina PUC, perhaps as part of the Mermaid Festival. People could hike out to the cabin for hotdogs, etc.
- \$300,000 available to Parks to provide electronic pay stations at Parks units. The manufacturer of the pay station claims that Parks would see a 30-40% increase on visitor fee compliance though Tyler thinks its closer to 20%. Twenty pay stations possible, five by next fall. Griswold wondered if they would really work well here. Tyler said that they pencil out and wants to give it a try, likely starting in Chugach State Park.
- Lynda Paquette noted that if an electronic pay station was installed, it could lead the visitor to a page that offers merchandising.
- Blackwell announced that Parks had purchased a surplus landing craft from USFS. It will be delivered in two weeks. Ransom noted that the previous landing craft sank in the harbor due to a small hull crack. Better to have the boat fail in the harbor rather than in use.
- Discussion of demand for park resources in Alaska.
- Luttrell asked when is enough use, enough. Luttrell asked if Parks would participate in a carrying capacity study of Resurrection Bay and if Parks could influence other agencies to participate in a Resurrection Bay carrying capacity study. Tyler said Parks can't influence other agencies and wouldn't be a lead; he suggested working with DEC. Blackwell mentioned that in other places, the USFS has collaborated with Parks for funding. Blackwell suggested maybe getting agencies together to discuss carrying capacity.
- Lynda Paquette asked if there is any coordination between Parks and state and feds to repair Lowell Point road. City of Seward has applied to Kenai Peninsula Borough for emergency funding after road damage caused by high tides, storm surge, and high winds in December 2017. Blackwell expanded that the Borough also learned that damage to public property Peninsula-wide is more extensive than previously thought. Once

a list of damages is completed and a threshold is met, the governor can ask for federal assistance. Lynda Paquette recognized that emergency funded repair may not address long-term improvement needs of the road. But the Lowell Point road is the second highest used road in the area and is concerned that a substandard road will affect visitors and safety. The LP road is a state easement. Lynda Paquette envisioned a troubling scenario of visitors in 40 foot RVs meeting RVs towing a boat on the narrow road. Griswold mentioned that a poor visitor experience on the LP road would affect local tourism.

- Griswold wondered why Ransom is responsible for managing Captain Cook State Park on the northwest side of the Kenai Peninsula. Discussion on staffing levels and administratively, possibly shifting management responsibility to a closer Parks office.
- Tyler briefly reviewed Seward CAB goals. The new Parks website was discussed. Griswold noted that while there were many improvements, Lowell Point and Tonsina Point, two very popular areas, are hardly mentioned on the website. Tyler said Parks might add a story to the website about the new Tonsina PUC.
- Tyler suggested that the goals be more specific. For example, work with Parks, be more specific with timeline. Griswold mentioned that one of CAB goals is to get the entire Tonsina watershed into Parks management. Luttrell has sent letters to DMLW asking for advice with no response. Tyler suggested more frequent communication with Clark Cox.
- Discussion of plan updates and a mention by Griswold that an update to the Caines Head Management Plan is a CAB goal. Griswold asked if CAB can start on a plan update but Tyler suggested waiting until later because changes in the future might invalidate work now.
- Tyler agreed to sign revised SCAB bylaws after he reviewed them.
- 19:30 Tyler, Blackwell and Ransom had to leave, so the CAB postponed the remainder of the agenda to next meeting.

VIII. Public Comments None

IX. Adjournment

A. Board Comments None

B. Date/Location of Next Meeting: February 13, 6 pm, AVTEC Culinary Arts

C. Motion to Adjourn: Paul moved adjournment, Wright seconded. 19:32