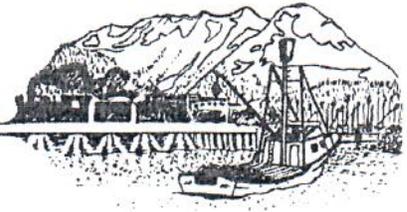


CITY OF CORDOVA



PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
Special Meeting / Nirvana Park & Spit Position Letter
Tuesday, March 7th, 2017
6:00 PM at the Cordova Center, Mayors Conference Room
AGENDA

Commission Chair

Wendy Ranney

Commission Members

Stephen Phillips, Karen Hallquist, Marvin VanDenBroek, Kara Johnson, Dave Zastrow, Miriam Dunbar

Parks and Recreation Director

Susie Herschleb

Administrative Assistant

Heather Brannon

Cordova Parks and Recreation is essential for providing and fostering Parks, Programs and Facilities for all in pursuit of a healthy sustainable community.

- A. **CALL TO ORDER**
- B. **ROLL CALL:** Wendy Ranney, Stephen Phillips, Karen Hallquist, Marvin VanDenBroek, Kara Johnson, Dave Zastrow, Miriam Dunbar, Susie Herschleb, and Heather Brannon.
- C. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**
- D. **VISITOR COMMUNICATIONS**
- E. **CONSENT CALENDAR**
- F. **REPORTS**
- G. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**
 - 1. **Position Letter / Nirvana & Spit**
- H. **NEW BUSINESS**
- I. **PENDING AGENDA**
- J. **COMMISSION COMMENTS**
- K. **ADJOURNMENT**

Appendix:

- A1. Letter Draft #2 / P&R Commission
- A2. Historical Society position letter
- A3. NVE position letter

From the City of Cordova Parks and Recreation Commission

P.O. Box 1210
Cordova AK, 99574
(907)424-7282

DRAFT



The Eyak Lake Spit and Nirvana Park is a dynamic space for a number of reasons. Only recently has the Parks and Recreation Commission become better educated about the site's cultural history. The Parks and Recreation Commission desires to be an active partner in creating a new approach to using this property that inspires visitors to respect and celebrate the special space that it is.

The Parks and Recreation Commission is a group of volunteer advocates for recreation in our Community. The Commission is an advisory commission to the City of Cordova, City Council. The Commission's Mission Statement:

Cordova Parks and Recreation is essential for providing and fostering Parks, Programs and Facilities for all in the pursuit of a healthy sustainable community.

The Eyak Lake Spit has been the only open, public access beach to Eyak Lake for many years. For this reason, it is an extremely busy place on a beautiful summer day. During good weather spells it is common to see 10+ vehicles parked on the spit and garbage receptacles overflowing by midday Saturday. Multiple user groups will visit the Eyak Lake Spit simultaneously. Jet skiers frequent the beach launching and parking at the water's edge. Kayaking, swimming picnicking, bonfires and sunbathing are also common activities. The 60 gallon port-o-john cannot serve the number of people who visit the Park. Toilet paper is commonly found by maintenance staff all around the wooded areas of Nirvana Park.

The Parks and Recreation Commission has been concerned about the Department's ability to safely manage multiple user groups at the Park and Spit. Safety became an even greater concern with the placement of a buoy jet ski course; very close to the shore. Discussion at the Commission table focused on better managing this beach with signage. Designating a safe swim area away from motorized traffic on the lake was the highest priority.

As advocates for recreation, the Commission would like to suggest to continue to allow **some** of our Community's preferred recreational activities at the Spit, while providing an opportunity to learn about its history to everyone who visits the Park.

The Parks and Recreation Commission recommends the following management practices and enhancements:

- Restrict all motorized traffic via land, water or ice onto the Spit.
- Restrict moorage of any motorized vessel/vehicle on the beach.

- Restrict motorized traffic within 50 feet of the beach; not only to protect swimmers but to further protect the beach /burial sites from erosion caused by the wake & moorage of motorized traffic via open water.
- Be thoughtful in selecting an acceptable form of erosion control to repair the existing issues and prevent further erosion on the Spit that would be caused by the prevailing weather. Use practices suggested by organizations familiar with techniques of erosion repair/control when dealing with burial sites.
- Place a higher capacity bathroom facility at the Park. This will prevent distribution of waste in undesirable areas affecting aquatic ecosystems and the health and safety of visitors.
- Create a culture of respect and ownership in the Park through interpretive signage and meaningful artwork that educates the Community about its cultural significance.
- Designate a swimming area for the Community to recreate safely. The Spit is a remarkable place to swim because it is beautiful, it has a nice slow slope into the deep water and it stays sunny from early morning all through the day. The Commission believes it would further enhance a swimming area to use a more comfortable surface material to walk on while entering the water; like pea gravel.
- Place fire rings along the beach to contain live fires and the debris left behind. These fire rings would be tended to by the Parks and Recreation Department.
- Create a number of private seating areas along the beach with the benches that have been crafted out of timbers harvested from Nirvana Park.

In closing, it should be mentioned, the beach at Skater's Cabin will now be open to the public from 11am-7pm daily. This will be promoted extensively, early in the season. Renters of the cabin will be made aware of this change upon reservation. The hope is that this will disperse some recreational traffic normally condensed to the Spit. Midday at Skaters Cabin tends to be a nice sunny spot and kids particularly love the swim platform.

Respectfully,

The Parks and Recreation Commission:

Wendy Ranney, Commission Chair.

Miriam Dunbar, Commission Secretary.

Dave Zastrow, Commission vice Chair.

Kara Johnson

Karen Hallquist

Marvin Van Den Broek



*Preserving Cordova's past for the future...
A community museum and educational facility.*

PO Box 391, 601 422 First Street, Cordova Alaska 99574 www.cordovamuseum.org

Position Paper

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The Cordova Historical Society wishes to acknowledge the importance of the area in the community known locally as 'The Spit and Nirvana Park.'

As historians, the Society appreciates and acknowledges that this area of Cordova has over literally hundreds, if not thousands of years, accumulated a uniqueness and continuity of community spirit that we all treasure. As a sacred burial site for generations of local Alaska Natives; as a German immigrant's version of Nirvana in the 1920s and has a family gathering place for weddings, birthdays, swimming lessons and Easter Egg hunts.

The sacredness of a burial place where regardless of ancestry souls rest. A German immigrant's personal choice of 'Nirvana' that he decorated with natural gems and his own talents. Described in a 1920s, tourist brochure as 'charming, meditative, garden of fairies.'

Cordova's weather took its harsh toll over time. in the 1940's, The Civilian Conservation Corps worked to save the Spit from eroding completely away by constructing a revetment to protect the sacred burial grounds.

Generation upon generation of Eyak, Suplqyat, Cordovans, immigrants, tourists all frequented the park for everything from corn chowder feeds, to picnics to Easter Egg hunts, to weddings, to birthday parties, to haunted forest adventures. And many a young person in Cordova has learned to first swim here along the safe shallow shores of Eyak Lake.

The Cordova Historical Society recognizes the continuity of community importance of this place and would like to go on record ~~as~~ noting the following:

- CHS recommends the Spit become a non-motorized area ~~apart from and~~ limited to use by float airplanes.
- CHS recommends stabilization of the Spit to prevent further erosion of the burial remains that have been identified. In addition, ~~and~~ proper landscaping and interpretive markers be installed acknowledging the sacredness of the Spit.
- CHS recommends a replica cast-iron gate or other iron work to be used to distinguish where the Spit and Nirvana Park meet. This will clarify, delineate and assist in the education of the public to the specialness of the place.
- CHS recommends the City of Cordova and Parks and Rec Department work to expand a local swimming beach along the shores adjoining the Spit/Park.

- CHS recommends designating parking areas and trails throughout the Nirvana Park area with interpretive signs telling the stories of the first cemetery in Cordova, Nirvana Park in Feldman's day and the importance of the park today to the community.
- CHS recommends a working committee develop short-term restoration plans and long-term maintenance plans.

DRAFT

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www.eyak-nsn.gov



10,000 years in our Traditional Homeland, Prince William Sound, the Copper River Delta, and the Gulf of Alaska

December 28th, 2016

Mike Webber
Cordova Historical Society
P.O. Box 391
Cordova, AK 99574

Dear Mr. Webber:

This letter is in reference to the Eyak Lake Spit proposed use cases. Native Village of Eyak Tribe has arguably the most vested interest in this area as first people and traditional users. As such an interested party, NVE participated in the X-ray project that was conducted to determine any underground burials and hosted a meeting for tribal members to share their stories and opinions on how to best preserve as well as use the spit.

Historical knowledge of this area by current Council members precludes a concrete conclusion of who is buried at the spit. It may be Eyak people, Chugach region people or even Chinese people or others. An Eyak person has been repatriated to the spit in 1993 as a separate burial.

The Tribal Council recognizes the sacredness of all burial sites, regardless of ancestry, and wishes to honor the departed by treating their final resting place with respect. The Council also wishes to encourage the use of traditional lands by current tribal members.

The spit has been used as an airplane and boat tie-up as well as a swimming and picnic spot. Many tribal members have used the spit recreationally, and continue to do so. The spit, however, has eroded substantially and has not been maintained in a manner consistent with traditional values of caring for burial sites.

Questions remain as to whether the spit is the best area to safely continue to contain bodies; if a memorial was erected, where the responsibility of maintenance would lie; and would a burial ground necessarily exclude all other activity by matter of being a burial ground, and if it does, how does that affect other popular recreational areas such as Nirvana Park.

At this time, The Native Village of Eyak Tribal Council recommends the following course of action to the City:

- Current Rasmuson funding be used to replace the eroded areas of the spit and to re-fill the area to prevent erosion from re-occurring and to protect the existing graves from damage and exposure.
- The alders and trees cut down and the site repaired and continuously maintained so that it looks respected.
- A memorial area at the end of the spit be created utilizing NVE input and that the City maintain it under its existing Parks and Recs program, and that this section be off limits to vehicular traffic.
- Existing outhouses or port-a-potties be maintained in good condition.
- Any airplane or boat tie-ups which may be created and/or maintained done so as to not disturb existing graves.
- Boat and wave-runner launching return to the existing boat launch site at the old Park-Air area.

Council realizes that there are concerns with launchers dis-obeying runway rules, however, education and enforcement should be an active and expected component in order to establish safe coexistence between user groups.

Respectfully,
Darrel Olsen, Native Village of Eyak Tribal Council Chairman

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