



POLICY BOARD MEETING

Meeting Minutes

December 16, 2020 • 12:00 – 2:30 P.M.

FAST Planning Office, 100 Cushman Street, Suite 205, Fairbanks, AK

Web Conference at: <https://fastplanning.us/keepup/zoom/>

Zoom Meeting Phone Number: 1 (253) 215-8782 Meeting ID: 818 0954 0725

1. Call to Order

Mr. Anderson, Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:03 p.m.

2. Introduction of Members and Attendees

Attendee

Representative Organization

*Ryan Anderson, Chair	Director, DOT&PF Northern Region
*Jim Matherly, Vice Chair	Mayor, City of Fairbanks
*Bryce Ward (absent)	Mayor, Fairbanks North Star Borough
*Michael Welch (absent)	Mayor, City of North Pole
*Aaron Gibson (absent)	Fairbanks City Council
*Alice Edwards	Director, DEC Division of Air Quality
*Frank Tomaszewski	FNSB Assembly
**Jackson Fox	FAST Planning
**Olivia Lunsford	FAST Planning
**Deborah Todd	FAST Planning
**Randi Bailey	DOT&PF Planning
**Don Galligan (absent)	FNSB Planning
+Kellen Spillman	FNSB Planning
+Steven Hoke	DEC Air Quality
+Judy Chapman	DOT&PF Planning
+Bob Pristash	City of Fairbanks Engineering
Tim Zinza	City of Fairbanks
Ivet Hall	DOT&PF Preconstruction
John Lohrey	Federal Highway Administration
Alex Gagne-Hawes	Citizen

**FAST Planning Policy Board Members, ** FAST Planning Staff Members, + FAST Planning Technical Committee Members*

3. Approval of the December 16, 2020 Agenda

Motion: To approve the December 16, 2020 Agenda. (Matherly/Edwards).

Discussion: No further discussion.

Vote on Motion: None opposed. Approved.

4. Approval of the November 18, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Motion: To approve the November 18, 2020 Meeting Minutes.
(Matherly/Edwards).

Discussion: No further discussion.

Vote on Motion: None opposed. Approved.

5. Committee/Working Group Reports (including the Chair's Report)

a. Staff Report and Technical Committee Action Items

Mr. Fox noted the following updates:

- **Borough Road Service Area Expansion Plan:** A work session was held with the Consultant team and various Borough departments. Five different alternatives were developed to address orphan roads and the various road service districts throughout the Borough. The alternatives will be showcased to the Road Service Area Commission as well as presentations to the Policy Board and Technical Committee in January 2021.
- **Interior Delegation:** Mr. Fox and Mr. Anderson provided a presentation to and open discussion with the Interior Delegation. Mr. Anderson focused primarily on DOT Maintenance and some of the challenges they were experiencing. Mr. Fox provided a presentation about Capital Projects between Fairbanks and North Pole, FAST Planning funds, DOT funds, and how we partner on all those projects, as well as showing them the project nomination process and how the TIP worked with the STIP.
- **FAST Planning Annual CPA Audit:** The annual audit was conducted, and financial statements were being prepared, and we will calendar an agenda item to hear a report from the Auditor in January.
- **Draft Road Standards Manual** The Draft Road Service Manual was received and was currently under review by the Borough and will also be reviewed by FAST Planning staff and comments will be provided to the Consultant by the first week of January 2021.

6. Public Comment Period (Non-Action Items)

No public comment.

7. Old Business

a. FAST Planning Article XI, Conflict of Interest – Annual Statements

Mr. Fox explained that this was a carryover from the previous agenda, but he wanted to remind them that he was still looking for signatures from a few of the Policy Board members.

b. Project Enhancement Committee Meeting Seat Appointments (Action Item)

• ***Policy Board Ratification of Committee Member Seat Appointments***

Mr. Fox explained that nine out of the ten available seats were filled and then the list needed to be approved by the Policy Board. Mr. Fox explained that the vacant seat belonged to the City of North Pole and he had spoken with Mayor Welch and he indicated that he had turned over the remaining nomination decision to the North Pole City Council to make that selection. Mr. Fox stated that he also wanted to make sure that Mayor Matherly was aware that if he nominated Bob Pristash to the Project Enhancement Committee, he would be a non-voting member since he already served on the Technical Committee. Mr. Fox stated that the first PEC meeting was scheduled for January 7, 2021.

Public Comment: No public comment.

Motion: To accept the member list for the Project Enhancement Committee. (Matherly/Edwards).

Discussion: Mr. Anderson asked Mayor Matherly if wanted to leave Mr. Pristash on the list with his motion.

Mayor Matherly stated that he wanted to leave Mr. Pristash on the list for now or table this item until the next meeting as he was not prepared to make another selection and would have to give it some thought and get back to them.

Mr. Anderson asked Mayor Matherly if that meant that Mr. Pristash remained on the list for now.

Mayor Matherly stated that Mr. Anderson was correct.

Vote on Motion: None opposed. Approved.

8. New Business

a. FAST Planning Office Annual Membership Dues

Mr. Fox explained that the MOU for FAST Planning was included in the meeting packet and reminded everyone that FAST Planning would be sending out invoices to the individual organization for their annual membership dues the first week of January 2021.

b. Lacey Street Reconstruction Stakeholder Meeting Update

• *Review of Final Design Concepts and Next Steps for Project Development*

Mr. Fox provided an update on the Stakeholder Meetings that were held and explained that the meeting packet contained the final design concepts derived from those meetings and the FAST Planning website contained the 360 immersion graphics created by Corey DiRutigliano of Bettisworth North that were produced for those concepts. Mr. Fox explained that the concepts were then turned over to the City of Fairbanks for the Mayor and City Council to decide whether they wanted to use any of the concepts in their design.

c. Chena Riverwalk, Stage III (Action Item)

• *Update on communications with Alaska Railroad regarding land interest and review of alternatives for project moving forward*

Mr. Fox explained that a two-page letter was sent to the Alaska Railroad Board for the project requesting a long-term land interest for installation of the path at no cost to the community. Mr. Fox stated that the Railroad had discussed the letter at three different meetings, but no official action had been taken on that letter to date. Mr. Fox stated that he received a telephone call from Jim Kubitz of the Real Estate Department and Jim Kubitz of the Railroad Board, and they indicated that the Board was not interested in granting that long-term interest at this time as they wanted to see development in that subdivision unfold before they committed to granting long-term land interest for this project. Mr. Fox stated that the Railroad had sold several residential lots in that subdivision and there were other lots for sale. Mr. Fox stated that the Railroad had entered had into a long-term lease with a tenant that was erecting a building this summer. Mr. Fox stated that the Railroad wanted to see what future property development occurred to see how that path would affect those property owners and postpone their decision for one year. Mr. Fox explained that DOT felt that the postponement by the Railroad might be a no answer and had provided two options that were prepared as potential options for moving forward. Mr. Fox stated that a motion was made for a third option and passed by the Technical Committee.

Option #1 was to rescope the project by removing the section of the path that would have been along the river between Peger Road and the footbridge at Pioneer Park and install a new sidewalk or separated path from the Phillips Field Road intersection to the new driveway that was put in at Chena Landings Loop off Peger Road. Mr. Fox stated that in addition to that path installation, the project could resurface the existing shared-use path that connected the footbridge to Chena Landings Loop. Mr. Fox stated that the Railroad Board had expressed interest in getting that path resurfaced and adding some lighting. The project would save the project about a million dollars but would not meet the purpose and need for the project but did not preclude the path being built in the future.

Option #2 was to request closure of the project to participation by the FHWA and request that FHWA cover that cost. Mr. Fox explained that often when the DOT closed a project that used Federal dollars, they were required to pay that money back. Mr. Fox stated that there was a tremendous amount of discussion about this project at the Technical Committee Meeting and Option #3 was proposed.

Option #3 was to keep the project open for one year and await the Railroad's decision while continuing to reiterate FAST Planning and the Community's desire for a path along the Chena River.

Mr. Anderson commented that DOT was always challenged because they did not like to put projects on hold and had several fairly stringent requirements from FHWA to make sure projects kept moving. Mr. Anderson explained they had end date requirements for those projects, and if they got delayed, they had to ask FHWA for permission to put a project on hold and could get turned down so DOT could not unilaterally say they were putting a project on hold. Mr. Anderson stated that if that was something that the Policy Board wanted to consider, DOT would have to work with their FHWA partners on that. Mr. Anderson stated that from the DOT perspective they would like to build something and if they found a place here where they could make some good out of this project and still work on another avenue with the Railroad that did not interfere with project schedules and funding, the best option for DOT was Option #1.

Public Comment:

Mr. Spillman, of the Fairbanks North Star Borough and a member of the Technical Committee, commented that he was the maker of the motion at the Technical Committee and it was supported by the Technical Committee.

Mr. Spillman continued that his intent for the motion was to continue the public process. Mr. Spillman explained that there had been about 30 years of history on the project and the project had been supported by the public. Mr. Spillman stated that anything they could do to try to bring the Chena Riverwalk project forward would be beneficial. Mr. Spillman stated that they could keep it open for a year and they could reevaluate in one year.

Mr. Tomaszewski asked Mr. Spillman if heard correctly that the project had been on the books for 30 years.

Mr. Spillman stated that it was not this particular project as this project was only a couple years into the process, but the Borough had been supporting or trying to obtain a walkway along the Chena for about 30 years and the first Resolution he found was from the Borough Assembly from approximately 1990.

Mr. Pristash, City Engineer, City of Fairbanks, commented that the City had a permit with the Railroad that had several stipulations but one of the hardest ones to meet for this project was the 8-ft. easement width. Mr. Pristash stated that the designs they had sent to the Railroad had been wider than 8-ft. and the last one they sent was 20-ft. wide. Mr. Pristash stated that one of the reasons the Railroad mentioned in their most recent rejection was that 20-ft. width. Mr. Pristash stated that he thought the City had a design that they could submit to the Railroad that had a 10-ft. required width for an easement and thought they could explain to the Railroad where the path was located on high ground or where it went through the floodway. Mr. Pristash stated that the point he was trying to make was that if they submitted that project to the Railroad one more time with the reduced width requirement that showed that it could be done and the Railroad still rejected it, he thought that might help their case with FHWA for not paying back funds that were already spent on the project. Mr. Pristash thought that not closing the project now and negotiating a little more with the Railroad would not hurt anything so that was the reason he would suggest it.

Ms. Hall, DOT&PF, commented that she wanted to clarify for the Policy Board that the current right-of-way permit the City had for the project did not meet all the conditions necessary for spending Federal money so even if the City submitted the alternative with the proposed 10-ft. easement for the pathway, it would still need modification and would not be of sufficient interest to suspend Federal money.

Motion: To continue the Chena Riverwalk, Stage III project as *is* for one year to continue discussion with the Alaska Railroad. (Matherly/Tomaszewski).

Discussion: Mayor Matherly stated that it made sense to him and thought it was a good idea to keep it going and see what happened.

Ms. Edwards stated that appreciated the comments she heard on the project and she knew the project had a lot of importance to the community but was also concerned that based on their past communications with the Railroad knew that it was hard to get any decision from the Railroad and was not optimistic that they were going to get very far but it was worth keeping the project active and taking the time since the project had a lot of public support.

Mr. Anderson stated that DOT's track record with the Railroad on these types of things and time had not been great and they were not in favor of leaving that project open for another year. Mr. Anderson stated that they had time constraints for each phase that they worked within and the next time frame for this project was May 1, 2022. Mr. Anderson stated that he thought there was challenges to this approach but another thing about holding onto projects was that they cost more money. Mr. Anderson stated that he would prefer that there was something real to work towards like approaching the Railroad with

an easement concept and thought that it was something they could at least go after and were not just twiddling their thumbs for a year.

Ms. Edwards stated that she knew that the idea of Option #1 was to rescope the project and do some work on it and did not preclude the opportunity to establish a new project or to look at the trail along the river and asked if her understanding was correct.

Mr. Anderson stated that depending on the timing of it, if they were to change the scope that project would continue on and get built and if progress was made with the Railroad, a new project start could be made so there was that potential in Option #1.

Ms. Edwards asked Mr. Anderson if they needed a whole year at this point or whether they could pursue other ideas that the Technical Committee raised in the next 6-9 months to have ideas to keep up with that next time trap of May 2022.

Mr. Fox stated that he thought that what needed to happen was to enter into new discussions with the Railroad. Mr. Fox stated that our letter to them had requested a long-term lease that was free to the community. Mr. Fox stated that they might be able to negotiate a price to get this project moving forward so if they were hung up on this “no cost to the community” they could determine what a long-term land lease with a 50-year term would cost and negotiate an offer of what they would want if they were able to resurface that path using federal funds. Mr. Fox stated that it showed good faith to the Railroad and enhanced their property sales with the lighting out there. Mr. Fox stated that if they could add lighting to the project and pay some money towards a long-term land lease, that might help the Railroad make a decision in their favor.

Vote on Motion: None opposed. Approved.

d. 5th Avenue Reconstruction – Design Increase (Action Item)

Mr. Fox explained that a request was received for a project design increase of \$226,000 from DOT and the City of Fairbanks. Mr. Fox stated that the reasons for the request were that the estimate for final design was developed a few years ago with the assumption that DOT would be solely designing the project and then as they got to the preliminary engineering phase, they realized that there was more work involved with right-of-way easements and utility impacts, and during the engineering phase they spent more money on public involvement than estimated. Mr. Fox stated that FAST Planning currently had sufficient funds to cover the increase if it was approved by the Policy Board.

Public Comment: Mr. Pristash, City Engineer, City of Fairbanks,

commented that it was the environment they worked in when putting the estimates together and they had never designed anything like this project. Mr. Pristash stated that generally the design cost was about 20% of the construction cost. Mr. Pristash stated that with the features desired and this new estimate were more in line with what they wanted the project to be including features that were not envisioned such as stormwater treatment, decorative street and pedestrian lighting, and wider sidewalks.

Motion: To approve the 5th Avenue Reconstruction Project design increase as presented. (Edwards/Matherly).

Discussion: Ms. Edwards stated that she knew they were running close coming out of last year's projects and asked Mr. Fox if there were any other funding increases that would be coming in.

Mr. Fox stated that he had one other small increase that he was aware of that would be on the Technical Committee Agenda for their approval in January 2021.

Vote on Motion: None opposed. Approved.

9. Other Issues

No other issues.

10. Informational Items

a. Obligations and Offsets

Mr. Fox explained the obligations and offsets included in the meeting packet.

11. Policy Board Member Comments

- Mr. Tomaszewski thanked everyone for their hard work and wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.
- Ms. Edwards thanked everyone for a great year, wished everyone happy holidays, and told everyone to stay safe.
- Mayor Matherly commented that any Board he was involved with that had to embrace COVID the way they did, with the electronics and technology, to keep it available for all of them to attend and include the public had been huge. Mayor Matherly stated that there were some cities that had been struggling with public input, meetings, and the Open Meetings Act and were getting a lot of flak for that. Mayor Matherly stated that the fact that Jackson Fox and his team stepped up and created this availability to meet on-line was incredible. Mayor Matherly stated that for all the bad stuff that went on, they got some good work done, in his personal opinion. Mayor Matherly stated that he wanted to thank not just the staff but every member of this Board who had dedicated themselves to working through this COVID issue. Mayor Matherly commented that hopefully a year from now with all the vaccine rollout and everything else, they would be back face to face, but, if not, they would continue to do the good work that were doing right now. Mayor Matherly wished everyone a Merry Christmas and lots of blessings.
- Mr. Anderson thanked everyone for all their hard work and knew they were all headed into 2021 and knew they were all really looking forward to 2021.

12. Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn. (Edwards/Tomaszewski). The meeting adjourned at 1:39 p.m. The next Policy Board Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 20, 2021, 12-2 p.m.

Approved: _____



Ryan Anderson, Chair
FAST Planning Policy Board

Date: 1/21/2021