



## CITY OF WASILLA

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### INFORMATION MEMORANDUM NO. 93-03

**From:** Mayor Stein  
**Date:** January 15, 1993  
**Subject:** Parks and Recreation

In response to the parks and recreation policy direction given in the 1992 Comprehensive Plan and supported by the MEA Resource Team Report, the Administration has initiated action to increase the level of parks and recreation service in Wasilla.

The strategy is to assure continued fair share base-line funding of City parks from the Borough while establishing legal authority for the City to carry out certain additional services. The Borough has areawide parks and recreation powers and must authorize the delegation of those powers.

Assembly member Barbara Lacher has asked that the Borough Administration prepare an ordinance to transfer parks powers to the City with the agreement that the City will receive a fair share of available funding.

Consequently, the Administration is preparing a FY94 budget proposal which will:

- (1) Provide for maintenance, operation and repair and replacement of the basic public park infrastructure including turf, equipment, restrooms, buildings, courts and other facilities.
- (2) Provide for a full-time parks and recreation coordinator position to manage a year-round recreation program through the coordination of volunteers, scheduling of users and managing public facilities.
- (3) Anticipate new revenues from recreation program fees.

The City Code provides for a parks commission (WMC 8.03). It has been inactive since 1986. The Code will have to be updated if Council wishes to reactivate the commission.

John C. Stein, Mayor

Enclosures: 1992 Comprehensive Plan 5-15 through 5-17  
1992 MEA Resource Team Report, p. 41  
WMC 8.03

1. The existing exterior stucco finish and roof coping are badly weathered, allowing snow and water to seep into the school.
2. Replacement of carpeting and upgrades to interior walls are needed.
3. Boiler room modifications are required to resolve heating problems.

In addition, the school has experienced some problems with trespassers and the principal believes this could be largely resolved by fencing the site. In the opinion of the school principal, the condition of the Wasilla High School borders on fair, although with adequate maintenance, the facility should have a remaining useful life of at least 20 years.

## **Parks & Recreation**

Parks and recreation services are provided by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, although for some facilities, the City of Wasilla provides these services under contract to the Borough.

The major challenge facing Wasilla and other communities throughout the Borough is the lack of funding to fully operate and maintain existing parks. Recent action by the Borough Assembly to reduce park and recreation funding directly affects park facilities in Wasilla. Parks and recreation is an extremely important public service which contributes to quality of life, community appearance, and the tourism and visitor industry.

The City should support efforts to enable the Borough to meet its areawide park and recreation responsibilities. If adequate support for these programs is not possible at the Borough level, the City should consider the delegation of park powers or the conveyance of certain parks to local governments. User fees and increased local financial support may be required.

**Wasilla Lake Park.** Wasilla Lake Park is the most popular outdoor recreational area within the City of Wasilla. This highly visible park, picnic area and swimming area lies at the western end of Wasilla Lake, adjacent to the Parks Highway and Crusey Street. The park is 2.1 acres in size, and has a small .67 acre parking lot adjacent to it. The City operates and maintains the park under a Borough contract.

Wasilla Lake Park was established in 1980 under a grant from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. A pavilion was added in 1988. During the same year, Wasilla Lake Park rest room facilities were hooked up to the municipal water and sewer system.

The park is grassed, although some additional trees have been planted, and features a covered wooden pavilion, a fenced sand pit area for small children, a plaque honoring George Alexander Parks and concrete block toilet facilities. Offshore, a buoy rope delineates a safe area for swimming.

The park has several serious deficiencies:

1. The park is too small to cope with heavy demand on warm summer days and weekends.
2. The paved parking lot is much too small to cope with existing demand. Although it has 60 designated parking spaces, the lot often cannot accommodate demand.
3. Vandalism is a problem.
4. Vehicles often park directly along the right-of-way of the Parks Highway.

Two solutions to help resolve the above problems are recommended:

1. DOT&PF plans to upgrade the Parks Highway during the late 1990's. This project requires relocation of the

Alaska Railroad and upgrading of the highway along Wasilla Lake. The City and the Borough should work with the State to ensure that proposed plans provide expansion room for the park, especially for public parking. Possible solutions include a specific exit and frontage road for the park, including additional parking and landscaping. Traffic exiting the park could use Crusey Street.

2. The Borough should work toward acquiring additional park land along the shoreline of Wasilla Lake.

**Lake Lucille Park.** This 79 acre tract, owned and operated by the Borough, is a heavily-wooded regional park designed for overnight camping, as well as for day access to Lake Lucille. The park was established in 1987 and contains two camping areas with a total of 57 camp sites, several picnic sites and four trails. The old Wasilla Post Office (boarded up) is located near the entrance of the park.

Parking areas are provided at the day use picnicking area and where the trail/boardwalk lead to Lake Lucille. The Borough intends to expand the parking lot near Lake Lucille and install non-motorized boating facilities on the lake.

The park is an important attraction as Wasilla strives to become an important overnight stop for tourists. It is not yet a popular campground destination, however, and the facility needs several improvements. For example, the park:

1. Is relatively remote from tourist traffic using the Parks Highway, although effective marketing and signage could counter this problem.
2. Has no developed recreation areas suitable for children.

3. Needs improved access to Lake Lucille.
4. Suffers from occasional vandalism.
5. The old Wasilla Post Office building should be removed from the park as it has deteriorated to a point where it is a potential hazard.

**Carter Park.** This half-acre park is located along the eastern shore of Lake Lucille and is operated by the City under contract to the Borough. It provides canoe access, playground and picnicking facilities. Restrooms are also provided. About 12 vehicles can park in a gravel parking area on Lake Street. Vandalism is a periodic problem.

**May Carter Land Donations.** Mrs. May Carter has offered to donate three parcels of land to the Borough for use as park land in Wasilla. One parcel would significantly add to the size of Lake Lucille Park by over 42 acres. Two other smaller parcels would provide public access to the lake from Lakeview Avenue and greatly expand the size of Carter Park. These generous donations are currently under review by the Borough.

**Bumpus Ballfields.** The Bumpus ballfields are reached via Church Road and Mystery Avenue and occupy a 10 acre site, plus a 2 acre parking area. The fields are owned by the City of Wasilla and are managed by the Mat-Su Softball Association. An adjacent 10 acre site is leased from the City by the American Legion for its baseball field.

The Bumpus ballfields were established in 1988 with State funding. Facilities include four softball fields, a central concession stand and associated amenities. Each ball field is fenced and has two 40-person bleachers. A concrete block toilet complex serves both the Bumpus ballfields and the adjacent American Legion baseball field. The Bumpus ballfields are served by a Class B well and a DEC

approved septic system. The Lions Club plans to add a picnic area immediately beyond the present entrance to the ballfields. A large unimproved 2 acre parking area serves both the Bumpus ballfields and the American Legion baseball field.

**Fritzler Little League Fields.** The Fritzler Little League Fields are located immediately east of Iditarod Elementary School and are accessed from Bogard Road. The site includes a Little League baseball field and a Babe Ruth baseball field. An adjacent softball field is part of the high school complex. Unpaved parking serves all three facilities. Vandalism is a significant problem.

**Wasilla Swimming Pool.** The Wasilla swimming pool is located within Wasilla High School and currently serves over 75,000 patrons per year, counting both student and public use. During school hours, the pool is operated by the School District, while after hours the pool is operated and maintained by the Borough. Parking is provided with direct access to Bogard Road.

The existing chemical storage and pump room at the Wasilla pool is located within the main school building and represents a life and safety hazard. In order to alleviate the potential danger to school personnel, patrons and staff, this room should be located on an outside wall and have an outside entrance.

**Mat-Su Ice Arena.** The Mat-Su Ice Arena is used for public skating, private rental, physical fitness and hockey. The ice arena is located on Bogard Road within the Wasilla Middle School site. The facility is owned and operated by the Borough.

The main ice arena building is approximately 28,200 square feet in area. Two former school portable buildings are attached. The paved parking lot associated with the ice arena has

parking spaces for 36 vehicles. An immediately adjacent unpaved parking area is also available. In addition, patrons can use school parking amenities after school hours. During special events, the available parking space is sometimes inadequate.

From the city's perspective, the major deficiency with the facility is that it is not hooked up to the Wasilla sewer system. The

ice arena also lacks shower facilities. The Borough intends to make improvements to the facility by connecting it to the city sewer system, replacing bleacher seats, and repairing the ice arena ceiling. In the longer term, the Borough intends to enlarge the facility.

**Leo M. Nunley Park (Townsite Park).**

This 1.14 acre urban park is located along Swanson Avenue between Willow and Knik Streets and is operated by the City under contract to the Borough.

A 495 foot long safety fence separates the park from Swanson Avenue. Park amenities include playground equipment, a picnicking area, a tennis court and restrooms. Paved parking is provided for 13 vehicles.

The Planning and Utilities Commission has requested that additional fencing be built to keep small children away from adjacent streets.

**Other.** In addition to developed parks, three undeveloped parcels in the Wasilla Estates, Catherine and Ravenswood subdivisions have been donated to the City of Wasilla as future park sites.

life skills with youth and work with them on community projects, such as reopening an old movie theater, for example.

"Youth Exchange With Seniors (YES) Project Training Guide" and videos are available through the Home Economics Curriculum Center, Texas Tech University, Box 41161, Lubbock, Texas 79409-1162; or call (806) 742-3189; Contact: Sheryl Boyd.

#### *4.2 Establish a Clearinghouse or Center for Youth Activities*

We heard repeatedly from parents and professionals working with children in the Mat-Su Valley that there is need for a clearinghouse or center for youth activities. Although there are numerous after-school activities and opportunities, the Valley seems to lack any central focus or coordination of activities, as well as a dedicated space to provide youth activities outside the schools.

Residents suggested locations for such activities, including a Valley Hospital plan to construct a center for youth activities as part of their building plans in Wasilla. Another location was suggested in Palmer at the proposed Matanuska Maid Center.

In a rural Minnesota community, each school district contributed financially to the hiring of one community-wide coordinator for youth programs. For further information, contact: Kristie Stewart, Coordinator, Swift County Youth Coordinator, P.O. Box 208, Benson, Minnesota 56215; phone (612) 843-2440.

#### *4.3 Reconsider Parks and Recreation Funding*

Desirable and inexpensive programming for recreational activities provides the greatest amount of options for leisure time. In many locations, a relatively small investment in public recreation has been demonstrated to be the best method to reduce the higher cost of rehabilitation and other corrective measures.

In this light, members of the community, particularly those holding the purse strings, should review the decision to reduce funding to the Mat-Su Department of Parks and Recreation.

#### *4.4 Explore Cooperative Arrangements*

Investigate a cooperative arrangement between a non-profit, youth agency (i.e., YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs of Alaska, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts) and the Mat-Su Parks and Recreation Department. Eagle River has an active chapter of the Boys and Girls Clubs associated with Anchorage, but we did not find a similar strong, nonprofit, youth-oriented service agency in the Mat-Su area. Churches, adult service organizations, the school system, the city and borough government, and individuals can cooperate to solve the free-time choices of youth.

CHAPTER 8.03PARKS COMMISSIONACTIVENOTSECTIONS:

- 8.03.010 Parks Commission Established-Purpose
- 8.03.020 Commission Membership
- 8.03.030 Commission Officials
- 8.03.040 Vacancies
- 8.03.050 Meetings
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- 8.03.070 Reserved
- 8.03.080 Formal Acts by Motion
- 8.03.090 Funds
- 8.03.100 Additional Functions of Parks Commission

8.03.010 Parks Commission Established-Purpose. There is hereby established the Parks Commission for the City of Wasilla to constitute a Parks Commission to advise the Council on matters pertaining to City beautification, parks, playgrounds and cemeteries. The Parks Commission area of responsibility and authority excludes athletic fields and team sports facilities. (Ord. 82-22)

8.03.020 Commission Membership.

A. The Parks Commission shall consist of not less than three (3) members, the majority of members must be City residents. (Ord. 82-22)

B. Members shall be appointed by the Mayor for a term of three (3) years subject to confirmation by the Council. Members first appointed shall draw lots for one, two, and three year terms. Appointments to fill vacancies are for the unexpired term. The compensation and expenses of Parks Commission shall be paid as directed by Council. (Ord. 82-22)

8.03.030 Commission Officials. The Commission shall elect a Chairman to conduct the affairs of the Commission and preside over meetings, a Vice-chairman to serve as Chairman in his absence, and a Clerk to prepare the minutes of the journal of the Commission's proceedings. (Ord. 82-22)

8.03.040 Vacancies.

A. A vacancy shall be declared and filled as above provided, under the following conditions:

1. If a person nominated and confirmed to membership fails to qualify and take office within 30 days;

2. If a member departs from the City with the intent to remain away for a period of 90 or more days;
3. If a member's resignation is submitted and accepted by the Council;
4. If a member is physically unable to attend Commission meetings for a period of more than 90 days; or
5. If a member misses 3 or more consecutive regular meetings, unless excused by the Commission.  
(Ord. 82-22)

B. The Clerk shall keep attendance records and notify the Chairman when vacancies occur. (Ord. 82-22)

8.03.050 Meetings.

A. Regular meetings shall be held at least once every two months. Special meetings may be called by the Commission Chairman or shall be called by him at the request of 2 members. (Ord. 82-22)

B. Meetings shall be conducted under Robert's Rules of Order, and such modified or amended rules as may be adopted by the Commission. (Ord. 82-22)

C. The Clerk shall keep minutes and a journal of all meetings which shall be a public record. Minutes and records shall be filed with the Municipal Clerk. (Ord. 82-22)

8.03.060 Order of Business.

A. The order of business at regular meetings shall be:

1. Approval of minutes of previous meetings as amended or corrected;
2. Reading and disposition of Correspondence;
3. Persons to be Heard;
4. Unfinished Business;
5. New Business;
6. Commissioners' Comments;
7. Audience Comments; and
8. Adjournment. (Ord. 82-22)

8.03.070--Reserved.

8.03.080 Formal Acts by Motion. All formal actions of the Commission shall be made by motion by a majority of the Commission. (Ord. 82-22)

8.03.090 Funds. All funds of the Commission received as fees and charges or otherwise, shall be deposited in the general fund of the City as receipts of the activities of the Commission. (Ord. 82-22)

8.03.100 Additional Functions of Parks Commission.

A. To prepare from time to time, at the direction of the Planning Commission or on its own initiative, plans for the systematic development of parks, campgrounds, playgrounds, cemeteries and for the beautification of the City of Wasilla. (Ord. 82-22)

B. To coordinate with, and obtain approval of the Planning Commission of site locations and general development plans for parks, campgrounds, playgrounds and cemeteries. (Ord. 82-22)

C. To recommend to the City Council proposals for the general and specific development of parks, campgrounds, playgrounds and cemeteries. (Ord. 82-22)

D. To prepare, in detail, not later than April 1 of each year, a proposed annual budget for construction, reconstruction, operations, and maintenance of each City park, campground, playground and cemetery. The Parks Commission shall prepare such budgets in the format prescribed by the Finance Director, who, along with the City Administrative Officer, will make recommendations and prepare the budget for presentation to Council. (Ord. 82-22; Ord. 86-6 §2 1986)

E. To recommend to the Council such rules, procedures and regulations for adoption by Ordinance that are believed necessary for the safety, general welfare, and financial necessity pertaining to the use of and the activities within city parks, campgrounds, playgrounds and cemeteries. (Ord. 82-22)

F. To assist the City of Wasilla in enrolling and directing volunteer groups and individuals to maintain, construct, or improve City parks, campgrounds, playgrounds and cemeteries. (Ord. 82-22)