



Assembly Supports Williwaw with Park

Mat-Su | Patty Sullivan | Wednesday, February 20, 2019

Last night (Feb. 19), the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly voted to donate a small parcel for a park and playground project to a non-profit formed by neighbors who are trying to rehabilitate and revitalize the Williwaw Subdivision near Wasilla. Since last year, the Borough has added street lights, towed illegally parked vehicles, placed large dumpsters, and increased code enforcement for junk and trash violations in Williwaw.

“When I look back on my years serving on the Assembly, I don’t think I’ll forget this moment,” said Borough Deputy Mayor Matthew Beck before the vote. “This might be the happiest and proudest moment of my years of serving. This is Mat-Su at its best, and why I love living here.”

Assembly Member Ted Leonard visited the neighborhood a year ago and remarked then about seeing a drug deal in daylight and excessive trash spread across lots. He told his peers on the Assembly by phone last night, “Less than a year ago the neighborhood came to the Assembly asking for us to partner with them in reclaiming their neighborhood. ... This next investment is very important ...,” he said of the land for a park.

The land is a 0.37-acre parcel located at the corner of E. Chickaloon Road and N. Copper Creek Road. A photo is posted here. The Borough received it through a tax foreclosure in the 1970s and retained it for a public purpose, such as a park, due to its substandard size.

The Assembly vote was unanimous to donate the land for \$10 to the neighbors who formed a non-profit called FISH, Families for the Improvement of Safety & Health.

Williwaw advocate and neighbor Michael Fernandez choked up during his testimony when he reported that his neighborhood participated in Halloween with one house receiving 60 trick-or-treaters. “I didn’t realize that it’s the first time in 20 years something like that has happened,” Fernandez told the Assembly.

Cottonwood Creek Elementary Principal Lisa Vrvilo also held back emotions when she described how 49 students ride the bus each day from the subdivision and how families over the years have shared stories with her on how they did not feel safe. “It’s exciting that things are moving in the right direction,” she said.