



American Planning Association
Alaska Chapter

Making Great Communities Happen

ALASKA PLANNING JOURNAL

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Quote of the Quarter

"Plans are only good intentions unless they immediately degenerate into hard work."

~~

Peter F. Drucker

Message from the President

By Maryellen Tuttell, AICP

November is almost here and that means it's time to gather with other planners from around the state for the Alaska State Planning Conference in Anchorage at the Captain Cook Hotel on November 11 to 13. If you missed last year's conference you missed an incredible line up of speakers and loads of information. This year's conference looks to be even better with a keynote talk by Mitch Silver, President of the American Planning Association. I had the pleasure of hearing Mitch speak at the Western Planner conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico a year ago and I can attest to what a captivating speaker he is. We have mobile tours planned to the new wind turbine farm on Fire Island, to the Anchorage Port and a tour of Anchorage's historic sites. There will a variety of conference sessions ranging from food system planning to economic development, housing and hazard mitigation planning. The conference banquet on Tuesday night will feature Alaska Planning Awards – examples of hard-won success in planning across the state. And, best of all there are opportunities to kick back, relax and socialize with other

planners from around the state. On Sunday night, Scared Scriptless, a local improvisational group will perform – you'll have fun and learn how to think on your feet – a skill always needed for planners! Finally, we will hold our annual business meeting on November 13 at the end of the conference.

So, if you attended in Fairbanks, come join us in Anchorage and if you didn't make it to Fairbanks, be sure not to miss this one.

Be sure to register today – space is limited on some of the mobile tours.

To register, visit [***http://www.cvent.com/events/2012-state-planning-conference/fees_5b8cf161080544e18965d730f079953e.aspx***](http://www.cvent.com/events/2012-state-planning-conference/fees_5b8cf161080544e18965d730f079953e.aspx)

Finally, I'd like to invite you to step forward and serve on the Alaska Chapter of the American Planning Association (AK-APA) board. We need people from across the state to participate in moving the Chapter forward and providing more support to Alaska planners. I have been involved with the AK-APA board in some way or another for almost 20 years and I am very excited about the level of participation and ex-

citement on the board over the last few years. The Chapter is moving in the right direction, but it needs more participation to help it achieve its mission.



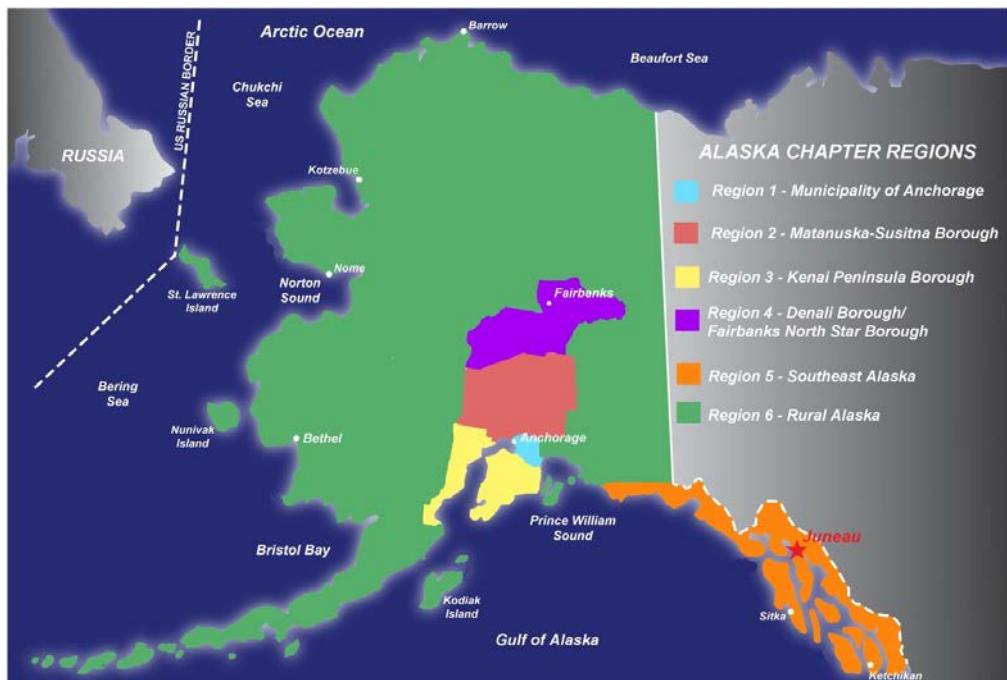
*Maryellen Tuttell, AICP
AK-APA President*

Now that the board is active and moving forward, I feel that it is time for me to step down and provide an opportunity for a new president to take the Chapter forward. I will continue to serve for two years as Past President and continue to be an active supporter of the Chapter; however, I feel that the Chapter needs someone with fresh energy to take it from here. Please see the request for nominations on page 2 and don't be shy about nominating yourself. Everyone is welcome!

Thanks to everyone who has served on the board the last few years – you've got the Chapter moving in the right direction and your time and efforts are most appreciated.

~ Maryellen Tuttell, AICP

Elections coming up: Nominations needed!



By Maryellen Tuttell

The Alaska Chapter of the American Planning Association (AK-APA) holds its annual election in December.

Nominations are now being accepted for President, Vice President, Professional Development Officer, Planning Commissioner Representative, Matanuska-Susitna Borough representative, Denali/Fairbanks representative, and the Rural region representative (see map of regions below). Nominations will be accepted through November 30.

President: The President chairs Board of Director meetings, provides leadership

on the development of Chapter policies, represents the Chapter at National APA leadership meetings, and represents the Chapter to the membership and public.

Vice President: The Chapter Vice President assists the President, assumes the duties of the President in the absence or incapacity of the President; and coordinates activities of the Regional representatives.

Professional Development Officer: The Professional Development Officer promotes professional development and continuing education; provides assistance to chapter members interested

in AICP membership; and plans and implements chapter programs to assist candidates for AICP membership.

Planning Commissioner Representative: The Planning Commissioner Representative advises the Chapter on the conduct of services to planning commissioners and the evolving character of the planning profession.

Regional Vice Presidents: Regional Vice Presidents serve as a representative of the Chapter in the regional area; coordinate regional activities with those of AK-APA; and further the purposes of the Chapter within the region. Regional Vice Presidents shall reside or be employed in the area they are representing.

More information on the board seats and responsibilities can be found on the AK-APA website: <http://www.planning.org/chapters/alaska/>

Remember, **nominations will be accepted through November 30**. To submit nominations or request additional information, please e-mail:

mtuttell@dowlhkm.com or
charlenestern@gmail.com

Congratulations!

By Laurie Cummings

Congratulations to the following AK-APA members who passed the November 2011 and May 2012 AICP exams. Way to go!

- Chris Beck
- Patrick Cotter
- Karen Iverson
- Leslie Robbins
- Michelle Wade
- Shanna Zuspan

- Stephanie Queen

To learn more about becoming certified or AICP, please visit <http://www.planning.org/certification/index.htm> or contact Laurie Cummings, AK-APA Professional Development Officer (PDO), at laurie.cummings@hdrinc.com

American Institute of Certified Planners

AICP is the American Planning Association's professional institute, providing recognized leadership nationwide in the certification of professional planners, ethics, professional development, planning education, and the standards of planning practice.



More AICP information

Reduced AICP Exam Fee Scholarship

For those individuals who may defer taking or are unable to take the AICP exam because of the high cost, AK-APA and AICP encourage you to submit an application for the Reduced AICP Exam Fee Scholarships. The AK-APA has been allotted one scholarship for each year. For more information,

please visit <http://www.alaskaplanning.org/aicp.htm> or contact Laurie Cummings, AK-APA PDO at laurie.cummings@hdrinc.com

Free CM Credits

To maintain your AICP certification, you need 32 hours of certification maintenance CM credits. Did you know that APA offers free distance educa-

tion CM credits so you can earn your credits without having to leave the state? Visit <http://www.planning.org/cm/free/> to learn more about the free credits offered by APA. Don't forget to log your CM credits afterwards. Your credits only count if they are in your log!



Laurie Cummings, AICP,
PDO



Anchorage Brown Bag Speaker Series

By Sally Russell Cox

The Anchorage Brown Bag Speaker Series has resumed for fall 2012. Planners with AICP certification have been able to receive one CM credit for attending each fall speaker session. We had two fantastic speakers in September and October:



**Government Hill Neighborhood Plan
Anchorage, Alaska**
Photos courtesy of Winter & Company

On September 20, Joni Wilm, Associate Planner/Urban Designer with the Municipality of Anchorage, spoke about the Government Hill Neighborhood Plan. This session focused on the issues and opportunities of developing a neighborhood plan that celebrates the heritage of Anchorage's first neighborhood and reflects the values of its residents. The planning process included active public participation in a series of community design charettes. In these sessions, residents helped envision future growth to meet the goals and objectives of the Government Hill neighborhood and the Anchorage Bowl 2020 Comprehensive Plan.

On October 16, Kristine Bunnell, Senior Planner with the Municipality of Anchorage, spoke about the Historic Preservation Plan for Anchorage's Four Original Neighborhoods (HPP). The HPP is the first plan of its kind in Anchorage. The plan

capitalized on past work completed by early historians at the Municipality, historic societies and groups, and present day community leaders mostly from the Government Hill, Downtown, South Addition and Fairview Community Councils. This session focused on ways in which issues and opportunities were used to arrive at a plan that addresses the preservation and management of historic resources, enhances local preservation values, and provides guidance for future impacts to historic resources and landscape features in Anchorage's Four Original Neighborhoods. The plan was presented to the Planning and Zoning Commission in September and will be presented to the Anchorage Assembly for approval by December 2012.

Funding for the HPP and the Government Hill Neighborhood Plan came from the Federal Highway Administration in response to potential impacts from the Knik Arm Crossing to the Government Hill, Downtown, South Addition and Fairview neighborhoods.

We will take a brief hiatus from the speaker sessions during November (for the 2012 Alaska Planning Conference) and December (for the holidays). We will start up again in full force in January, and I am currently solic-



Sally Russell Cox
AK-APA Anchorage Region VP

iting speakers for the months of January through May. I know many of you are working on interesting and challenging projects that would be great to showcase at the speaker sessions. Please feel free to contact me at 269-4588 or sally.cox@alaska.gov if you would be willing to present at an upcoming speaker session.

Speaker sessions are held at the Robert B. Atwood building in downtown Anchorage, generally during the third week of the month. Free parking is available on the second and third floors of the Linny Pacillo Parking Garage across the street from the Atwood Building. You can purchase lunch at Dianne's on the ground floor prior to the session.

Planning for Non-motorized Transportation in Fairbanks and North Pole

By Patrick Cotter, AICP,
GISP, Denali Borough/FNSB
Region VP

The Interior witnessed a recent surge in non-motorized transportation planning with several major studies completed. The first of these plans, the Fairbanks Metropolitan Area Transportation System (FMATS) Area Safe Routes to School (SRTS) plan, which began in mid-2010, was released in February 2012. The first of its kind for the area, the plan evaluated 18 schools in Fairbanks and North Pole and outlined potential infrastructure improvements at each. Recommendations in the study, which ranged from new sidewalk construction to bike rack replacement, helped the City of Fairbanks secure funding for construction of a

new sidewalk at Nordale Elementary and installation of flashing beacons at Barnette Magnet School. In addition to the infrastructure improvements recommended, the study developed a toolkit of educational resources on walking and bicycling safety that was distributed to all of the study area schools.

FMATS also completed the area's first Non-Motorized Transportation Plan (NMTP). The NMTP evaluated the connectivity and adequacy of the existing bicycle and pedestrian network in the urbanized areas of Fairbanks and North Pole, and made system improvement recommendations. The study also resulted in a planner's toolbox of improvement resources for non-motorized

transportation. The NMTP complements FMATS's long-range transportation plan and the work done by the seasonal mobility task force.

The third planning project aimed at non-motorized transportation is the Fairbanks Complete Streets project. Complete Streets are streets that are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, not just motor vehicles. This City of Fairbanks project evaluated street connectivity for all modes of transportation in downtown Fairbanks and developed infrastructure standards for downtown. Recommendations from the study include reduced lane



One of the options for making Cushman Street a complete street. source: Crandall Arambula

numbers on Cushman and Barnette streets, wider sidewalks, and additional landscaping features. Supported by the Downtown Association, the study will set a vision for a comprehensive, integrated street network for all transportation modes. Construction of the study's recommendations for Barnette and Cushman streets is anticipated in summer 2013.



City of Soldotna's New Storefront Improvement Program

Matching grants fund improvements to businesses on the highways



Cars cross the David Douthit Memorial Bridge in downtown Soldotna in July 2010. The Sterling Highway in Soldotna has the highest traffic counts of any road on the Kenai Peninsula, making Soldotna's downtown businesses highly visible to motorists.

*By Stephanie Queen, AICP
KPB Region VP*

In April 2011, the City of Soldotna adopted a new long-range plan, Envision Soldotna 2030. Among the many goals in the plan were several directly related to creating a more vibrant downtown, beautifying the highway corridors, and ensuring a healthy economy by supporting local businesses. Like many Alaskan communities, Soldotna's commercial district has formed primarily around two State highways which bisect the town. 'Envision' captured the community's desire for a better first impression to

visitors, and a more vibrant commercial core. The City created a new Storefront Improvement Program (SIP), as one effort to help achieve these goals.

The SIP is a reimbursable grant, which can fund up to 50% of the cost of eligible improvements to businesses in the target area, up to a maximum of \$5,000 per project. The 2012 program was limited to those businesses located along one of the City's two major highways, and can fund a variety of improvements including: storefronts; signs and graphics; windows; exterior lighting; canopies and awnings;

painting and masonry work; permanent landscaping; and accessibility upgrades. The SIP was designed to revitalize Soldotna's commercial core by stimulating additional private investment in local businesses. By partnering with local businesses to fund exterior improvements, the program aims to boost traffic, increase property values, and improve the overall look of the community.

The City began advertising the program in January 2012, by mailing brochures and information directly to land owners in the target area. The local chamber of commerce also advertised the program in their newsletter.

The initial response to the program far exceeded the City's expectations, with many worthy projects vying for limited funding. So, the administration went back to the City Council to ask for an additional appropriation – which was approved unanimously - thereby doubling the size of the program in its first year. The City was able to fund six projects, ranging from new building facades, improved signage, and landscaping, with a total City contribution of \$22,000. However, these six projects represent over \$190,000 of improvements, a huge return on a relatively small investment.

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Keep in touch with AK-APA and your fellow Planners

New Chapter Website

We have a new website! Our new site is hosted by National APA which saves AK-APA money and time, both of which are always in short supply! Please check out the new website and let us know what you think and tell us what kind of information you'd like to see on the site. It takes time to keep sites updated, but we'll do the best we can. Visit the site at: <http://www.planning.org/chapters/alaska/>

Facebook Page

Do you like AK-APA? If you are on Facebook, please like us and keep in touch. See what other planners are up to, ask for questions and advice on tough planning issues, see what planning-related events are happening in and around the state and across the country. Search on Facebook for **Alaska Chapter of the American Planning Association** or click on the Facebook link on our website.

Chapter Newsletter

Brag a little! Tell us what you're doing? What have you accomplished over the last year? We are always looking for articles for our Chapter newsletter and for Western Planner. Please feel free to submit articles about planning issues for consideration to our newsletter editor: STaylor@whpacific.com

City of Soldotna's New Storefront Improvement Program, continued

Several of these initial projects will not be complete until next spring, but the first project was recently completed. It included repainting two buildings, adding trim and architectural details, and replacing a non-conforming sign with a new, conforming one.

So far the program is working well, and the City is getting ready to open the program back up to new round of projects. The next step is to seek out new funding sources or methods (rather than simply using City general funds), to sustain the program and allow it to grow. The Storefront Improvement Program is just one small step towards economic development, but for Soldotna, it's a step in the right direction.



This is the 'before' picture, which shows the original sign which was non-conforming and in need of some TLC.



The sign was reduced in size to come into conformity, and includes new advertising copy and decorative pole covers. The project also included repainting the building (a portion of which is visible in this photo), and adding trim around the windows.



Left: Gary, the property owner, was pleased with the program, and says he would not have done the renovation if the grant funds had not been available through the Storefront Improvement Program.



By Donovan Bell, Associate Planner, Sheinberg Associates

*Juneau, Alaska
www.ScheinbergAssociates.com*

Whether planning a major freeway arterial or a neighborhood trail, transportation decisions affect a large number of stakeholders. Putting extra effort into public outreach and involvement helps to avoid many problems and makes the overall planning experience go more smoothly. At the **2012 Western Planners Conference in Billings, Montana**, Cindy Mendoza, Project Manager at MIG, Inc., spoke about the importance of public outreach and shared some useful tools and techniques to get the

Happy Trails: Successful Public Involvement in Trails & Transportation Planning

most out of these outreach efforts. Lora Mattox, transportation planner for the City of Billings and Yellowstone County, followed Cindy's presentation by sharing a personal experience about the hardships she faced due to an insufficient level of public involvement in a planning process, and the lessons she learned from that. The tools and lessons shared in this session can be applied to local situations and used to benefit future public outreach efforts.

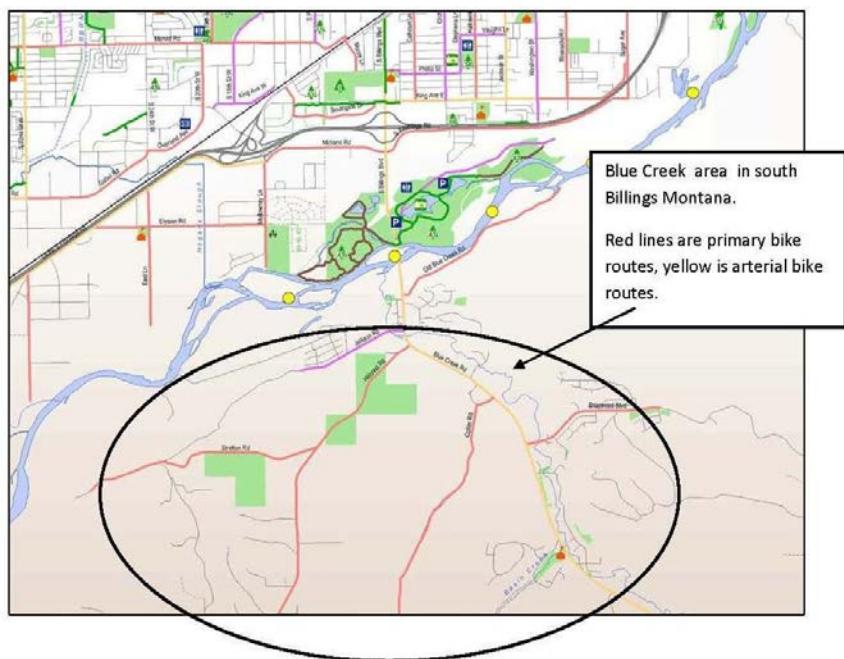
Reasons for Public Outreach

Local, state, and federal mandates require a certain level of public outreach when planning. However, there are many important reasons for outreach beyond meeting legal requirements. For example, people will eventually hear that a plan is under development, whether you

reach out or not. It is up to the planner to decide whether to let this information travel through a community in its own, often chaotic – and sometimes inaccurate – way, or to gain some control over the information through organized public outreach. Choosing when and how to provide information to the public and providing information in the clearest and most accurate manner is important. This helps avoid the misconceptions people may have about a developing plan or project. As American citizens, people feel that they have a right to help

decide what happens in their community. If planners neglect to inform them early in the process, people can react negatively and lose trust. Public outreach can also be a powerful tool, not just means of preventing public uproar. When the public is involved in plan creation there is usually a much higher level of support for the plan. This increased support can provide volunteers, stakeholder funding, important information and knowledge, and make it much more likely that a plan will be adopted and implemented.

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Example: Blue Creek area

The Blue Creek area, in south Billings, Montana, had been a rural farm land for many years. The rapid expansion of Billings, recently accelerated due to the revenue from the Bakken oil shale and other oil discoveries, led to increased development pressures. The area was witnessing its first paved roads and the addition of its first public school.

The 2004 Heritage Trail Plan Update was an effort to improve the communities' safety and connectivity. The plan included adding a pedestrian and bike trail through the Blue Creek area. The Heritage Trail Plan was in the process of being formally adopted. Meanwhile, Lora was working on a Neighborhood Plan for the Blue Creek area. The Neighborhood Plan included transportation and referenced the Heritage Trail Plan. Lora was holding bi-monthly meetings to work with the community and the Neighborhood Plan seemed to be moving forward smoothly. Then, unexpectedly, 307 area residents submitted a petition to the Yellow-

stone County Commissioners objection to the Heritage Trail Plan. Objections included not being individually informed of the planning process, the taking of private property and potential for trespass, private property abuse, property devaluation, criminal activities, and activity that is incompatible with the rural character of Blue Creek. This stopped the neighborhood planning effort in its tracks.

After a lot of hard work, Lora was able to get things moving forward again. The Public Participation Plan was updated, a bike and pedestrian transportation committee was formed, and the Pedestrian Trail and Bike Plan was amended to satisfy all parties. After 10 months of struggle, the Blue Creek Neighborhood Plan was able to continue its progress. This example highlights the importance of public outreach with the inclusion of all affected stakeholders.

Applying the Lessons

Juneau, like much of Alaska, is a place known for its geography, beauty, and wilderness. These defining features

are the main draw people have to this area. Juneau's local trail system provides access to this backyard wonderland. Residents strongly support the trail system and it seems like it would be an easy task to add a trail in this community. However, even a small scale trail plan has a broad range of potentially affected stakeholders that have varying opinions. To name a few examples of affected stakeholders and their concerns:

- Local hikers want a trail that doesn't invite heavy tourist traffic. Heavy traffic would likely increase litter and decrease wildlife viewing. Instead, they may want a longer, more challenging trail with few amenities.
- Commercial interests want to cater to tourism. Increased traffic in an area can be turned into revenue with food and merchandise sales. These stakeholders are interested in trails that are very accessible, relatively easy and have many amenities.
- Neighborhoods that are near proposed trails may complain about an increase in noise and traffic and a decrease in privacy, safety and parking near their homes.
- Outdoor enthusiasts may complain that the trail will interfere with or ruin their favorite fishing, hunting or camping spot.
- Environmentalists will be concerned with the impact the trail will have on nature and wildlife.
- Residents who participate in other recreational activities that depend on trails, such as snowmobilers and cyclists, will want the proposed trail to be accessible to their sports.
- Groups that have invested resources into planning trails, such as TrailMix or SEA-Trails, will want trails to align with their own plans and goals.

It becomes apparent that even a small scale transportation decision with a high level of general support can be complicated as you get into the details.

Identifying stakeholders is an important step in public outreach. Another crucial step is to define

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Happy trails: Public Involvement, cont.



Hiking in Juneau, Alaska. Photos from www.juneau-guide.com

the different methods of outreach that will be used to inform and involve them. It is important to provide outreach at multiple steps throughout the process. Common outreach methods include forming an advisory committee, holding public open houses, and creating a website to provide information and take input. Other tools and techniques can be used to increase the level of public involvement and reach a broader range of individuals. Intercept events involve going to

the public rather than having them come to you. This can be done by conducting short interviews with people at local trail heads, or setting up booths at public events. A potential way to broaden the array of comments received is to provide an interactive map, either online or on paper, that people can draw and write on to express their ideas. Or, you can hold a walking tour of the proposed trail. Walking through the Southeast Alaska wilderness can be nearly impossible, but some

sections can be navigated, and this will give people a stronger feeling of involvement in the process. Hosting a public service event, such as a trash pick-up day for the trail system, is another way to give people positive feelings about the project. Taking numerous outreach methods and packing them into a weeklong outreach program will show people that their input is really wanted in a project.

There are many methods for public outreach, and there are ways to involve the public for a project of any size or budget. Effective public involvement produces a better plan, broader support, and a higher likelihood of successful plan implementation.



Donovan Bell

Time to update the AK-APA bylaws

The AK-APA bylaws have been modified somewhat in the last few years as we have increased the size of the Board of Directors and decided to allow Chapter-only members who do not belong to APA (national organization). The AK-APA will be reviewing the bylaws at the upcoming November board meeting and will likely recommend changes for the membership to vote on with the December ballot. Although the immediate need for revisions is to address

what Board of Director seats Chapter-only members are eligible to hold, a review of the bylaws shows that many sections are outdated compared to current practices. For example, the bylaws assume that ballots will be sent out in the mail. Almost all Chapter business is conducted by e-mail these days – including balloting. The Elections section of the bylaws will be updated to reflect the use of e-mail ballots in addition to addressing the eligibility for

Board seats. If you are interested in the bylaws and potential changes, please attend the Chapter business meeting after the Alaska Planning Conference on November 13, 2012 in Anchorage. Or you can e-mail APA-AK president Maryellen Tuttell for more details: mtuttell@dowlhkm.com

Do you have great pictures of your community?

Send your photos to APJ editor, Suzanne Taylor at staylor@whpacific.com and she will feature them in future issues!

PS. Your articles are welcome too!



Alaska planners at APA National Conference in Los Angeles



AK-APA Board Members participated in the Wyoming vs. the World softball game in Billings, MT as part of the 2012 Western Planner Conference in August.



Left: A gathering of Juneau planners



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www.planning.org/chapters/alaska/

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From the Editor

The first significant snow hit Anchorage the other night. The little goblins and ghoulies are prepping for their fall feasting. Hurricane Sandy caused New York to cancel its Halloween parade. And the national political climate is equally stormy.

We, as planners, try to anticipate the “what ifs” in life. We work to help our communities and our clients be prepared for what may transpire. It’s a critical role

that can be filled with both stress and fun. While pressure can motivate and keep us on task, don’t forget to revel in the activities that relax you. Remember that life is good.

And while you’re remembering things... remember to VOTE, November 6th. Our choices today on ballot issues and candidates will have ripple effects for the future.

~ Suzanne ~



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