

AGENDA

INFORMATION UPDATE

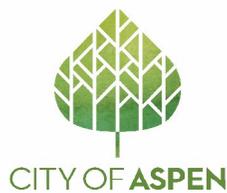
July 12, 2022

5:00 PM, City Council Chambers
427 Rio Grande Place



I. INFORMATION UPDATE

I.A. Bariloche Exchange



INFORMATION ONLY MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council
FROM: Austin Weiss, Parks and Recreation Director
THROUGH: Diane Foster, Assistant City Manager
MEMO DATE: June 21, 2022
MEETING DATE: June 28, 2022
RE: City of Aspen - Bariloche Sister Cities Exchange

City of Aspen/Bariloche - Sister Cities Exchange, May 2022

Mike Tunte, Parks Dept. Landscape Architect, and I recently returned from a 7 day trip to Bariloche, Argentina as a part of as Sister Cities professional exchange. In the fall of 2019, Diego Cannestraci, who at that time was the Park Superintendent for Nahuel Huapi National Park in Bariloche, was visiting Aspen and met with myself, Jeff Woods and Mike to talk about a large park project he was involved with on the outskirts of Bariloche. At that time, we toured Diego around to a number of our Parks and Open Spaces to give him a better understanding of the projects we have undertaken here in Aspen and to share creative ideas for park design. Later that winter, Diego, along with Aspen Sister Cities representatives, asked Mike and I if we would have any interest and availability to visit Bariloche and to consult on this 7000 acre park and open space project they were calling “Parque Central”. Unfortunately, in the spring of 2020, about a month after travel plans had been made, COVID-19 hit and international travel was not in the cards.



Over the next two years, we stayed in touch with Diego and his team, and this past February, as Covid numbers began to subside, they reached out to us to see if we could visit this May. During the several months leading up to our visit to Bariloche, Mike and I met with Diego and his team via online meetings and discussed their project at length,

including many of the challenges and opportunities they were faced with. We also met in person with Lala Caffarone and Griff Smith, our Sister Cities liaisons here in Aspen, to discuss

the unique challenges of land conservation in Argentina and to prepare ourselves for our trip.

After two years in the making, Mike and I finally boarded our plane and headed to Argentina on May 6th. After several long flights and a lengthy layover in Buenos Aires, we finally arrived in Bariloche on the evening of May 7th. Knowing that our time in Bariloche was very limited, our hosts wasted no time in getting us out to the park site and to start engaging with the numerous stakeholders in the project. Each day was packed with site visits and meetings, including a presentation to the key stakeholders, City Council members and local community members.

The park development project is very interesting as it is an extremely large, and stunning parcel of land that currently has a number of various recreational uses. Each one of these user groups wanting to ensure their interests are taken into consideration. This stakeholder and community engagement process is one of their biggest challenges and is a primary focus at this time. There are also other numerous political challenges that they are faced with that

add to the complexity of issues ahead of them. It's interesting that Bariloche is faced with many of the same challenges that many mountain communities, including ours, have seen since the pandemic with increased pressure on public lands and significant influx of new community members and visitors. Mike and I were able to share



ideas regarding public outreach models that we have had success with here in Aspen and to help them navigate what is probably their largest hurdle towards community support. We also spent a lot of time discussing the more technical challenges and opportunities regarding trail network design, public access, public transportation and natural resource management.

Our Bariloche hosts also went out of their way to show Mike and I the beautiful landscape and stunning scenery that their mountain community is known for. To have such a mountainous landscape set upon an enormous lake gives Bariloche a very unique beauty that mixes mountain and water activities. We hiked and toured several of their local municipal and national parks and saw numerous examples of they have been able to mix multiple uses, including private commercial leases, land conservation and public recreation.

As with any exchange of this type, the benefits were mutual and Mike and I returned with many new ideas and new perspectives for park development and open space preservation. We were impressed by the passion for the important work Bariloche is undertaking, the love of wild places and by the overall values that our two mountain communities share. This trip



was another reminder of the importance of the Sister Cities program and the opportunities for all mountain communities to share ideas and to learn from one another. We look forward to continuing to work with our new friends in Bariloche as they progress with the Parque Central and to see this amazing landscape preserved for generations to come. Our time in Bariloche was also an important reminder for each

of us of how lucky we are to call Aspen home and of the work we have ahead of ourselves to continue to preserve our own landscape and provide recreational opportunities that allow our community to connect to the natural world and fosters a renewal of spirit.

Austin Weiss
City of Aspen, Parks and Recreation Director