



FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, AUGUST 25, 2025
FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
800 CUSHMAN STREET, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

The City Council convened at 6:30 p.m. on the above date, following a 5:00 p.m. Work Session on Target-Based Budgeting, to conduct a Regular Meeting of the Fairbanks City Council via Zoom webinar and in City Council Chambers at 800 Cushman Street, Fairbanks, Alaska, with Mayor David Pruhs presiding and the following Councilmembers in attendance:

Councilmembers Present: Jerry Cleworth, Seat A
 Valerie Therrien, Seat B
 Sue Sprinkle, Seat C
 Crystal Tidwell, Seat D
 Lonny Marney, Seat E
 John Ringstad, Seat F

Absent: None

Also Present: D. Danyielle Snider, City Clerk
 Thomas Chard, City Attorney
 Michael Sanders, Chief of Staff
 Margarita Bell, Chief Financial Officer
 Jake Merritt, Human Resources Director
 Richard Sweet, Deputy Police Chief (remotely)
 Ron Dupee, Police Chief (remotely)
 Andrew Cocco, Fire Chief
 Kristi Merideth, FECC Manager (remotely)
 Jeremiah Cotter, Public Works Director
 Bob Pristash, City Engineer
 Nick Clark, Fire Battalion Chief

INVOCATION

The invocation was given by City Clerk Danyielle Snider.

FLAG SALUTATION

At the request of Mayor Pruhs, **Mr. Ringstad** led the flag salutation.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS

[Clerk Note: Names of citizens who provide comments may not be spelled correctly if their name was illegible on the physical sign-up sheet.]

Randy Zarnke – R. Zarnke expressed concern about unlicensed drivers operating unlicensed vehicles on City streets. He explained that he has witnessed an increase in the use of four-wheelers,

side-by-sides, electric scooters, and other similar vehicles, mostly by children, on roads within his Island Homes neighborhood as well as other areas of Fairbanks. He stated that some youth use the streets as a racetrack and are often clueless to traffic, riding on sidewalks, cutting off vehicles, and darting in and out of the street. He shared that he almost hit a boy a few years ago, so he is more attuned to the hazard it presents to the operators, pedestrians, and legally operated vehicles.

Ms. Sprinkle asked R. Zarnke if he has spoken with the parents of any of the children he had witnessed doing this. R. Zarnke stated that when he spoke to the kids they claimed that their riding was not illegal and would not say where they lived, so he was unable to speak to their parents.

Mayor Pruhs affirmed that the City had not approved any ordinance to permit such activity on City streets and that he would speak with the Chief of Police about the concerns. R. Zarnke also expressed the opinion that the new bicycle lanes in the downtown area were a solution in search of a problem and that he only saw one person using them all summer.

Harold Kankanton – H. Kankanton spoke in favor of the Emergency Service Patrol (ESP) and claimed that without the program he would not be around anymore nor would he be getting the help and treatment he needs. He shared that he had been sober for two months and that the service ESP provides is good for homeless individuals and the community.

Timothy Clark – T. Clark stated that he loves Fairbanks and the many organizations in the community but that he also loves his addiction. He shared that Fairbanks Integrated Community Services (FICS), which operates the ESP, saved him when he was on the verge of alcohol poisoning and that they did not give up on him even when he had given up on himself. He stated that he is now sober and that he would likely be dead if not for the ESP and their guidance.

Ms. Therrien asked if there was any specific individual from the ESP that he wanted to recognize. T. Clark stated that Skye, Anthony, Melody, and Amanda had all been instrumental in his treatment, and Northern Hope Center had helped a lot too.

Raven Fleagle – R. Fleagle stated that he works in peer support and case management with FICS and focuses on individuals who often fall through the gaps, such as repeat offenders who have no one to advocate for them and need help with transportation and filling out paperwork. He discussed his outreach work with the hospital and the success rates they are seeing with those engaged with the ESP. He shared that he is a lifelong Alaskan, loves his community, and cannot say enough about the benefits of the program that FICS had put into place.

Victor Buberger – V. Buberger stated that he was pleased to see that a previously inoperable streetlight on the Old Steese Highway, which he spoke about many times, had been repaired. He asked if the barriers along the temporary bicycle lanes on Barnette Street would be removed soon and if there was any information available about an incident from Saturday night that may have involved a police officer getting shot. **Mayor Pruhs** invited V. Buberger to stick around for the Mayor's Comments and Report portion of the agenda for details related to his questions.

Zach Rittel – Z. Rittel stated that he is a member of the Fairbanks Fire Department and expressed support for the ESP and FICS.

Mayor Pruhs, hearing no more requests for comment, declared Citizens' Comments closed.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to APPROVE the agenda and consent agenda.

Mr. Cleworth pulled items 12(d), Ordinance No. 6324, and 12(e), Ordinance No. 6325, from the consent agenda.

Mr. Ringstad pulled item 12(b), Resolution No. 5184, from the consent agenda.

Mayor Pruhs called for objection to the APPROVAL of the agenda, as amended, and hearing none, so ORDERED.

Clerk Snider read the consent agenda, as amended, into the record.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

- a) Regular Meeting Minutes of August 11, 2025

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

SPECIAL ORDERS

- a) The Fairbanks City Council held a public hearing and considered the following alcohol license applications for renewal:

Lic. #	DBA	License Type	Licensee	Address
4862	Southern Glazer's of AK	General Wholesale	Southern Glazer's Wine and Spirits of Alaska, LLC	3101 Peger Road, Bay 2
4548	Brewsters	Beverage Dispensary	Restaurant Concepts, LLC	354 Old Steese Highway
5051	Asiana Restaurant	Restaurant/ Eating Place	Young Mi Jin	2001 Airport Way

Mr. Ringstad, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to WAIVE PROTEST on the alcohol license applications for renewal.

Mayor Pruhs called for testimony and hearing none, declared Public Testimony closed.

Mayor Pruhs stated that he had not found any issues when reviewing the applications.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO WAIVE PROTEST ON THE ALCOHOL LICENSE APPLICATIONS FOR RENEWAL AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Cleworth, Marney, Ringstad, Sprinkle, Therrien, Tidwell
NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

- b) The Fairbanks City Council held a public hearing and considered the following marijuana license applications for renewal:

Lic. #	DBA	License Type	Licensee	Address
22809	Airport Way Best Bud	Retail Marijuana Store	Airport Way Trade Center, LLC	3598 Airport Way
10589	Nature's Releaf, LLC	Retail Marijuana Store	Nature's Releaf, LLC	507 7th Avenue
39378	Blaze, LLC	Retail Marijuana Store	Blaze, LLC	607 Old Steese Highway, Suite 106
16006	Arctic Bakery, LLC	Marijuana Product Manufacturing Facility	Arctic Bakery, LLC	1409 Well Street
10869	Grass Station 49	Retail Marijuana Store	The Grass Station, LLC	1326 Cushman Street

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to WAIVE PROTEST on the marijuana license applications for renewal.

Mayor Pruhs called for testimony and hearing none, declared Public Testimony closed.

Mayor Pruhs recounted how years ago they would have a full room of people wishing to provide testimony whenever a marijuana application was being reviewed. He discussed how the industry had settled well, with businesses assimilated into the town in a positive way.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO WAIVE PROTEST ON THE MARIJUANA LICENSE APPLICATIONS FOR RENEWAL AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Tidwell, Cleworth, Marney, Ringstad, Sprinkle, Therrien
NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

- c) The Fairbanks City Council held a public hearing and considered the following alcohol license application for transfer of ownership and restaurant endorsement:

Type/Lic.: Beverage Dispensary, Lic. #4247
To DBA: This and That Grill, LLC
From DBA: Brewster's
To Owner: This and That Grill, LLC
From Owner: Restaurant Concepts, LLC
Location: 3578 Airport Way, Fairbanks (no change)

Mayor Pruhs reported that the FFD had recommended the Council protest the application until construction is finished and the building is ready for inspection.

Mr. Ringstad, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to PROTEST the alcohol license application for transfer of ownership and restaurant endorsement until construction is finished and the building is ready for inspection.

Mayor Pruhs called for testimony and hearing none, declared Public Testimony closed.

Ms. Therrien noted that the state's Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) Board would be considering the application on September 16. She asked if there was an idea when the construction would be finished in case they needed to notify the ABC Board of the City's objection.

Bill St. Pierre – B. St. Pierre shared that he was the owner of the building and could answer most questions regarding the situation, given his past involvement with Brewster's. He stated that he believes the owners of the restaurant are confident they will be open within a couple months.

Ms. Sprinkle asked what the process would be if the application was not approved presently. **Mayor Pruhs** explained that the Council would be placing a condition that could be removed upon satisfactory completion.

Mr. Ringstad asked for clarification on B. St. Pierre's official role in the process. B. St. Pierre indicated that he is a former owner with Restaurant Concepts, LLC but currently is only affiliated by way of ownership of the building. **Mayor Pruhs** shared additional details regarding the ownership and plans for transfer between the two entities.

Ms. Tidwell noted that the space being considered had operated for many years as a restaurant and asked if there had been previous concerns regarding the building. **Mayor Pruhs** clarified that with the change in ownership there was likely remodeling taking place which was not yet complete and therefore not ready for inspection City departments.

Ms. Sprinkle asked for clarity regarding the current owners of the two entities represented on the application, and that information was provided by both Mayor Pruhs and B. St. Pierre.

Clerk Snider reviewed the typical process that is followed when the Council votes to protest with a requirement attached in order to lift the protest.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO PROTEST THE ALCOHOL LICENSE APPLICATION FOR TRANSFER OF OWNERSHIP AND RESTAURANT ENDORSEMENT UNTIL CONSTRUCTION IS FINISHED AND THE BUILDING IS READY FOR INSPECTION AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Cleworth, Marney, Ringstad, Sprinkle, Therrien, Tidwell

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

MAYOR'S COMMENTS AND REPORT

Mayor Pruhs asked Anthony Mosinski, Director of FICS, to provide a report on the ESP.

A. Mosinski shared that FICS had over 725 encounters since beginning operation in early May and that their services had grown considerably, with their current staff of five being slated to increase to seven. He reported that they will provide coverage from noon to midnight, seven days a week, and have been meeting with local organizations and individuals to receive feedback and discuss the most effective direction and areas of focus for the program. He discussed the ESP coverage area, the types of services it provides, and the connections being used within the community to support those in need, particularly with sobriety and substance abuse. He noted that so far, they have not had to transfer anyone to the Fairbanks Correctional Center. **Mayor Pruhs** praised the work of FICS and affirmed that they are fulfilling their contract with the City.

Ms. Sprinkle concurred that they are doing well and asked if they had outgrown the single van that had been provided for the program. A. Mosinski indicated that they have been okay with the single vehicle, noting that some encounters last longer than others and would therefore create an occasional stack of calls with lower priority needs. He stated that while they hope to expand services to cover certain medical supports, they are doing well with the current setup.

Ms. Therrien asked if he could share details of FICS's collaboration with the City's Community Paramedic. A. Mosinski stated that for years when he worked as part of the local mobile crisis team they often discussed the need for non-emergency medical support in many of the calls they would take. He shared that Community Paramedic Melody Smith has been incredible to work with and that they often have overlap with high-needs patients who would have challenges receiving care through traditional outpatient services. **Ms. Therrien** asked if they are able to serve those who are wheelchair-bound. A. Mosinski reported that he and his team had undergone lift-assist and mobility training, which had been used on occasion, and that he believes there have been discussions about the City potentially working to obtain an accessible van.

Mr. Marney asked A. Mosinski where he sees his team and mission in one year. A. Mosinski explained that it would be beneficial to have medical providers on board to help ensure individuals can be stabilized enough to participate in the levels of care available. He added that one goal is to relieve some of the burden from the emergency care system and focus on long-term, effective treatment for those in need. **Mr. Marney** asked if there had been any safety concerns. A. Mosinski reported that things had been going smoothly and that there were only two instances where the ESP had to request assistance from or partnership with the police.

Mayor Pruhs discussed the chaotic previous weekend involving significant law enforcement calls, a heavy windstorm that resulted in power outages, and other challenges. He spoke of the excellent work of the Fairbanks Emergency Communications Center (FECC) and the Fairbanks Police Department (FPD) during the chaos, noting that not one shot was fired by police officers.

COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Ms. Tidwell, Mr. Marney, and Mr. Ringstad each stated that they had no comments.

Mr. Cleworth spoke to the benefits of installing utilities underground, whenever possible.

Ms. Therrien gave a land acknowledgement. She expressed gratitude for the success of the ESP and the Community Paramedic program.

Ms. Sprinkle discussed the recent windstorm and the emergency activities that resulted. She spoke highly of the Fairbanks Fire Department (FFD) response to multiple calls and how no one got hurt.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a) Ordinance No. 6322 – An Ordinance Funding the Collective Bargaining Agreement Between the City of Fairbanks and Fairbanks Firefighters Union and Amending the 2025 City Operating Budget. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6322.

Zach Rittel – Z. Rittel shared that he had been involved with the contract negotiations from the Union side and acknowledged the lengthy process. He noted that for almost 70% of FFD, it would be their first time voting on a labor agreement, highlighting how many new employees there are. He suggested that the best outcome would be for as little drama as possible and a unanimous vote by the Council to pass the ordinance. He expressed hope that the relationship between the Union and Council could begin to be rebuilt.

Mayor Pruhs, hearing no more requests for comment, declared Public Testimony closed.

City Attorney Thomas Chard explained that a copy of the collective bargaining agreement (CBA), including all tracked changes, had been included for reference with the ordinance. He confirmed that the document will be cleaned up prior to execution. He expressed appreciation to everyone who participated in the process, from initial negotiations, to mediation, and arbitration. He thanked former City Attorney Paul Ewers for coming out of retirement to assist with the process.

Mr. Cleworth shared that he intended to vote in favor of the ordinance but wanted to discuss some concerning misconceptions of how City finances work. He referenced an email from an employee at FFD that was sent to the City Council in September of the previous year. He read a portion of the two-page message, as follows:

I am writing to you now as an employee of the City, as a Fairbanksan, and as a constituent trying to help you get it right.

* * * *

You folks run the only city I know that pays for everything in cash, refuses to take loans (which is why your credit rating is embarrassingly low, and why you fail to secure grants) or issue bonds, stashes millions of tax-payer dollars into accounts you can't use to pay workers (e.g. the permanent fund, capital fund, etc.) while screaming financial agony from the mountain tops.

Mr. Cleworth clarified that the City's Charter prohibits the Council from taking out loans without voter approval. He added that bonds also cannot be issued without voter approval and that it should not be considered a sin to pay for things in cash. He expressed disagreement with the idea that the Council hides money in accounts from which they cannot pay workers. **Mr. Cleworth** outlined the Permanent Fund as another item addressed in the City Charter, and he explained that the City withdraws every penny of the 4.5% that is allowed to be withdrawn from the fund each year, with

0.5% of that going into capital, as is also set forth in the Charter. He pointed out that the rest of the drawdown goes into the General Fund, which helps cover wages among other things; thus, the Permanent Fund is very much depended on to help pay City workers. **Mr. Cleworth** clarified that the three funds (Permanent, Capital, and General) are the only accounts the City has. He expressed hope that people will try to understand how City finances work. He complimented the work of Chief Financial Officer Margarita Bell and shared an excerpt from the arbitrator's ruling which aligned with the financial considerations CFO Bell had conveyed during the process, as follows:

...City budgets have tended to have a surplus at year's end. This surplus is primarily due to salary savings from vacant positions. These surpluses have routinely been transferred to the Capital Fund. The City points out that the Union proposes that such surpluses could and should be used to fund its financial proposals, including its request for a 23 percent wage increase.

The City alleges that the Union overlooks the fact that these transfers to the Capital Fund represent, along with the mandated transfer from the City's permanent fund, the primary source of funds for the City's capital needs. The City points out that the Capital Fund pays for "big ticket" expenditures, like fire engines, paving the roads the fire engines drive on, and the equipment that removes the snow so fire vehicles can get to where they need to go. As CFO Bell testified, the annual audit recommends that the City's capital expenditures match depreciation (around \$8M per year), and the City has not been close to meeting that goal.

Mr. Cleworth recounted that he has harped on the last point from the excerpt many times over the years and stated that the City relies too much on Fairbanks Area Surface Transportation (FAST) Planning for projects within the City. He reiterated that his main concern is the misunderstanding by some of how City finances work, where monies are, and why they are there. He complimented CFO Bell's diligent efforts and expressed gratitude that the process was done.

Ms. Therrien stated that she hopes mediation and arbitration can be avoided in the future as both are expensive. She expressed hope for an improved relationship between the City and the Fairbanks Firefighters Union (FFU). She suggested that the changes being made, along with the new positions created the previous year, would likely reduce overtime.

Mr. Marney asked for an update on current overtime costs. CFO Bell reported that the City is over budget in overtime at present but under budget in salaries and wages.

Mayor Pruhs stated the Council's job is to make sure that the FFD is staffed and operated at the highest level of any fire department in the state. He pointed out that during the two-year process to work towards an agreement with the FFU, they had still done that. He highlighted the addition of a third ambulance, the funding of new positions, and the creation of the Community Paramedic role as examples of how the City is working to serve the community. He asserted that the proposed contract treats everyone fairly and would attract new recruits. He spoke in favor of the ordinance.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6322 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Tidwell, Sprinkle, Ringstad, Marney, Therrien, Cleworth
NAYS: None
Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance
No. 6322 ADOPTED.

NEW BUSINESS

- a) Resolution No. 5183 – A Resolution Authorizing the City of Fairbanks to Request and Accept Funds from the Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) for FY2026 Emergency Service Patrol (ESP) Support. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- b) Resolution No. 5184 – A Resolution to Extend the 2024 Financial Audit Remittance for Explore Fairbanks. Introduced by Councilmember Marney.

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to APPROVE Resolution No. 5184.

Mr. Marney asked if Scott McCrea, President and CEO of Explore Fairbanks, could speak.

S. McCrea thanked the Council for considering the extension for the current year's audit just as it had done in the previous year, albeit for different reasons. He shared that they are very close to having a draft available for review but that they would not make the September 1 deadline due to setbacks such as staffing shortages and a migration to new accounting software. He acknowledged that it was his responsibility to meet obligations.

Mayor Pruhs recognized the effort being made and expressed appreciation for the advance communication to the Council about the delay. He recounted that the annual audit requirement for organizations that receive significant amounts through the Discretionary Fund, such as Explore Fairbanks, was only put in place two years prior and that it was understandable that it would take time to establish efficient practices to meet the obligation going forward.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION NO. 5184 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Ringstad, Therrien, Marney, Sprinkle, Cleworth, Tidwell
NAYS: None
Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Resolution
No. 5184 APPROVED.

- c) Ordinance No. 6323 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Chapter 46, Article IV, Offenses Involving Nuisance, Adding Regulations Limiting the Time Period Temporary Signs, Including Political Signs, Can Be Displayed Within the City of Fairbanks. Introduced by Councilmember Sprinkle.

ADVANCED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- d) Ordinance No. 6324 – An Ordinance Enacting Fairbanks General Code Section 2-65, Chief of Staff Authorities. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Therrien**, moved to ADVANCE Ordinance No. 6324.

Mr. Cleworth noted that there had been past occasions when both the Mayor and Chief of Staff were gone and asked if it would be prudent to outline a procedure for such a situation. He shared that when he was Mayor, the delegation would have gone to the Human Resources Director, but the recent practice has been to delegate the Chief Financial Officer, which he spoke in favor of.

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6324 by adding “The CFO will fulfill this function in the absence of both the Mayor and Chief of Staff” at the end of Sec. 2-65.

Mayor Pruhs asked if CFO Bell had any thoughts on the amendment. CFO Bell indicated that it would make sense in day-to-day operations, although she was unsure if it would be appropriate in an emergency situation. **Mayor Pruhs** confirmed the ordinance applied only to daily operations.

Mr. Ringstad asked if Sec. 2-65 was the appropriate location for the added language. **Mr. Cleworth** stated that he would defer to the City Attorney as to placement. Attorney Chard suggested that the section regarding mayoral authorities may be a better location, which would also require a change to the title of the ordinance. He stated that he could prepare an amended version as a proposed substitute before the next meeting. **Mr. Cleworth** indicated that he would be in favor of reviewing an updated version at the next work session.

Mr. Cleworth, with concurrence of the second, withdrew the motion to amend.

Ms. Therrien thanked the City Attorney for providing the memo regarding mayoral absence. She explained that it was helpful to know that the Council would not need to define those terms.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADVANCE ORDINANCE NO. 6324 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Cleworth, Marney, Tidwell, Ringstad, Sprinkle, Therrien

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

- e) Ordinance No. 6325 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Section 2-63, Succession to Office of Acting Mayor, and Section 2-64, Salary of Acting Mayor. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to ADVANCE Ordinance No. 6325.

Mr. Cleworth pointed out that the term “vacancy” is not used anywhere under Sec. 2-63 and asked if it should be. He discussed the concept of a Councilmember assuming the office of mayor pro tempore receiving the same salary as what the mayor would have received. He suggested that anyone filling the role under such a scenario would likely be otherwise employed and thus unable

to commit full-time to the temporary position. He expressed his intent to propose an amendment to prorate the compensation on an hourly basis so the individual would be paid the higher rate for only the hours they work as mayor pro tempore. **Mr. Cleworth** stated that the parameters of declaring a vacancy due to an inability to perform the duties of an office needs to be clearer. He pointed out that what most mayors do while serving in the position is far more than the minimum obligations under the Fairbanks General Code (FGC) and they must be mindful of the difference.

Ms. Therrien noted that there is extra work to process hourly payroll than a prorated monthly salary by the number of days worked. **Mr. Cleworth** pointed out that salaried employees are still asked to submit timesheets, even though their wages do not change and are exempt from overtime. He suggested that it would not be very difficult for the mayor pro tempore to track their hours nor for the payroll clerk to process hourly compensation as they do for other employees.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADVANCE ORDINANCE NO. 6325 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Therrien, Cleworth, Sprinkle, Ringstad, Marney, Tidwell

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. Cleworth reported that FAST Planning is looking ahead at improvement projects for 2026 which include repaving portions of Doyon Estates as well as Shannon Park. He stated that the City did fairly well considering that four organizations compete for the same pot of money.

Ms. Therrien shared copies of a letter from January 2023 from NuGen Development, in conjunction with The Bridge Foundation, which conveyed interest in supporting a \$200MM mixed-use development at the site of the Polaris Building. She noted that it included individual resolutions from April 2023 by the Fairbanks City Council and the Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly encouraging further economic development in downtown Fairbanks. She acknowledged that she was not on the Council at that time and expressed concern why nothing further happened.

Ms. Sprinkle indicated that she does not believe the Council saw the letter from January 2023. She stated that the Council had done many things to support economic development in the downtown area and that she does not think they treated the letter's author incorrectly.

Mr. Ringstad spoke of the difference between public process and private process, pointing out that the Council can only take on so many major issues at one time, and it addressed several over the last couple years. He asserted that the City needs to focus on cleaning up the area significantly before moving forward with new development. He discussed the importance of transparency during the public process, particularly in reviewing all proposals rather than just one. **Mr. Ringstad** suggested that government is designed to be inefficient and slow as a way to ensure the public can be informed and involved. He acknowledged the frustration in being unable to accomplish some things as quickly as one would like. He declared that the Council would not have been ready to deal with the issue at the time the letter was dated but that it is doing so now.

Mayor Pruhs noted that the header and footer to the page with the letter stated that it was a “Proposal to Negotiate” from the Alliance for Reason and Knowledge, and that the font was different than the rest of the document which itself was referenced as “Appendix A: Nugen/Bridge Letter.” He reported that he receives about six emails a week from Robert Shields, the head of the Alliance for Reason and Knowledge, and that he did not know if he ever received the 2023 letter. He added that he is unsure how the resolutions tie into the letter.

Ms. Therrien stated that since she has been unable to be on the committee she does not know what has been happening. She asked Mr. Ringstad if he had previously seen the letter. **Mr. Ringstad** stated that he had not.

Ms. Sprinkle reported on the Board of Directors meeting she attended with the Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce. She shared that the Chamber’s Government Relations Committee had included a robust conversation between State Senator Robert Myers and former Alaska House Representative Bart LeBon regarding a desire to bring a conversation to the State level to consider changes to the structure of the Alaska Permanent Fund. She spoke highly of the recent Downtown Market. She asked if there was any update to the marijuana license application the Council recently considered where upgrades to ductwork were required. **Mayor Pruhs** indicated that he did not have any update on that business but would follow up.

Ms. Tidwell shared that she had toured the cannabis business in question and that the Council had voted to lift the protest on the license application for renewal. She described the work that had been completed and the business’s plans to downsize, rebuild, and grow with time. She offered to follow up with the owners if there were any more specific questions from the Council. **Ms. Tidwell** stated that she had a potential conflict of interest with AFL-CIO labor negotiations which was slated as the topic for an Executive Session later in the meeting. She shared that she is employed by the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 302 which is part of the AFL. She noted that she had not participated in past negotiations due to this potential conflict and wanted to ensure it was addressed again this time around.

Mayor Pruhs declared that Ms. Tidwell had a conflict of interest.

Attorney Chard provided a procedural comment to explain that the Mayor, as Chair, holds the authority to make the ruling but that the Council could overrule his decision.

Ms. Tidwell clarified that while she understands she may not have an explicit conflict, she recognizes the importance of addressing even a perception of such. She shared that the contract with the City is not one that she deals with in her role, and she does not benefit financially from it.

Mr. Marney shared that he ran into Officer James, who would be concluding his seasonal downtown patrol later in the week. He invited the Council to sign a card thanking him for his service. He reported that he passed a house on 8th Avenue earlier which had been boarded up for a decade but now had signs of being remodeled. **Mr. Cleworth** stated that he believes the home belongs to a former councilmember and that recent ordinances may have been an incentive to act.

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to OVERRULE the Mayor’s declaration of Ms. Tidwell’s conflict of interest.

Ms. Therrien explained that her understanding was that a conflict of interest only exists when an opportunity for financial gain is involved and that Ms. Tidwell indicated that is not the case. She asserted that the Council should discuss whether or not the Mayor's decision should be overruled.

Mayor Pruhs stated that he recalled Ms. Tidwell indicating that she believed she had a conflict. He asked the City Attorney to advise as to whether it was appropriate for Ms. Tidwell to participate in the current discussion and in any vote on the motion. He asked for confirmation that Ms. Tidwell is a member of the Local 302 Operating Engineers, which is included in the AFL-CIO contract. **Ms. Tidwell** confirmed that she was. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that that was the basis of his ruling. Attorney Chard and Clerk Snider each indicated that they did not find anything within the rules prohibiting Ms. Tidwell from participating in any discussion and vote on the matter.

Mr. Ringstad spoke of the notion where, especially in politics, perception can be as important as reality during a public process. He expressed his opinion that if there is a potential for a perception of a conflict of interest, it is not fair for them to put councilmembers in that position.

Mr. Cleworth concurred that public perception is important and that it could be awkward for Ms. Tidwell to be included in the Executive Session. He recounted that many years ago the City moved its bank accounts to a new financial institution and that he was on the Board of Directors of the new bank, which compelled him to declare a conflict of interest as soon as it was suggested, even though he would not financially benefit from the City's decision. He shared that he was glad he did because later on an individual persistently raised the issue of a perceived conflict. **Mr. Cleworth** asserted that Ms. Tidwell's role, as had been disclosed, did constitute a conflict of interest, even if there was no intent for her to benefit in any way.

Ms. Sprinkle stated that she had seconded the motion to ensure that any concerns could be further discussed. She agreed that it would put Ms. Tidwell in an awkward position and asked if Ms. Tidwell could share her thoughts on the Mayor's ruling.

Ms. Tidwell indicated that she is fine either way. She shared that she sometimes feels sad to not be able to participate in the discussion simply because she believes she could share a general understanding of things. She stated that she agrees with the perception component and that she recognizes the need for the Mayor to make such rulings.

Mayor Pruhs requested that the roll call vote on the motion include Ms. Tidwell.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO OVERRULE THE MAYOR'S DECLARATION OF MS. TIDWELL'S CONFLICT OF INTEREST AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Therrien
NAYS: Sprinkle, Marney, Ringstad, Cleworth
ABSTAIN: Tidwell

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION FAILED.

Mayor Pruhs thanked Ms. Therrien for prompting the discussion. He stated that Ms. Tidwell is an exceptional councilmember and that he appreciates her voice and how she goes about things.

Mr. Cleworth clarified that his earlier comments regarding FAST Planning funding pertained to general maintenance and not some of the larger projects included in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). He spoke of the recently completed project on Cowles Street and cited it as an example of the great things that can be done by the City.

CITY CLERK'S REPORT

Clerk Snider stated that she had nothing to report.

CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Attorney Chard stated that he had nothing to report.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Cleworth moved to ENTER into an Executive Session to discuss AFL-CIO Labor Negotiations.

Mayor Pruhs called for objection and, hearing none, so ORDERED.

Mayor Pruhs called for a brief recess at 8:06 p.m., after which the City Council, excluding Ms. Tidwell, reconvened in Executive Session.

- a) AFL-CIO Labor Negotiations [permissible under State law, including the provision at AS 44.62.310(c)(1)] (ended at 8:50 p.m.)

Mr. Cleworth stated that the Council met in an Executive Session to discuss AFL-CIO Labor Negotiations. He affirmed that no formal action had been taken.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to ADJOURN the meeting.

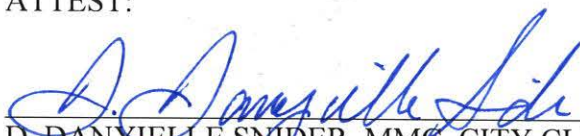
Mayor Pruhs called for objection and, hearing none, so ORDERED.

Mayor Pruhs declared the meeting adjourned at 8:51 p.m.



DAVID PRUHS, MAYOR

ATTEST:



D. DANYIELLE SNIDER, MMC, CITY CLERK

Transcribed by: CC