



FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, SEPTEMBER 8, 2025  
FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
800 CUSHMAN STREET, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

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The City Council convened at 6:30 p.m. on the above date, following a 5:00 p.m. Work Session on Polaris Building Site RFP Process, 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 (remotely)  
   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  
   Ron Dupee, Police Chief  
   Richard Sweet, Deputy Police Chief  
   Andrew Coccaro, Fire Chief  
   Bob Pristash, City Engineer  
   Teal Soden, Public Information Officer  
   Jennifer Payan, Accounting Specialist (remotely)  
   Brenda McFarlane, Crisis Now Coordinator

**INVOCATION**

The invocation was given by City Clerk Danyielle Snider.

**FLAG SALUTATION**

At the request of Mayor Pruhs, **Ms. Tidwell** 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.]*

Stanislav Gutsul – S. Gutsul shared that he is a managing member of the entity that owns the Co-Op Plaza downtown and thanked the City Council for the recent Storefront Improvement Program, which they utilized. He discussed the work performed thus far and a challenge they have with a

light pole obstructing installation of a new awning, referencing photos that had been distributed to Councilmembers. He affirmed that they did not want to install the new fixture around the pole and suggested a solution, which would require approval and coordination with the City.

**Mayor Pruhs** requested that City Engineer Robert Pristash discuss options with S. Gutsul to determine what could be done.

**Mr. Cleworth** asked for more details on the proposed awning. S. Gutsul reviewed one photograph that showed an example of one frame of the overall unit and further described the desired final design. He asserted that his proposed solution would be mutually beneficial as the business would provide replacement lighting. **Mr. Cleworth** asked how they would handle snowmelt concerns with the sharp-angled awning only covering half the width of the sidewalk. S. Gutsul shared that he had discussed this very issue with R. Pristash and Building Official Christoph Falke whose opinions were that the angle of the awning would prevent snow buildup during the winter and that the issue raised by Mr. Cleworth would be minimal, especially combined with their regular manual snow removal efforts during the winter to ensure pedestrian safety.

**Ms. Sprinkle** asked if the referenced light pole was the only light along that area of the street. R. Pristash provided an initial response to describe lighting in the area of the Co-Op Plaza. **Mayor Pruhs** directed that, per the City Attorney, this question would be best addressed at another time.

*Jomo Stewart, President/CEO of Fairbanks Economic Development Corporation (FEDC)* – J. Stewart provided a copy of the completed 2025 Annual Economic Report and reviewed high points of the findings. He noted that, compared to 2024, the economy of the Fairbanks area was doing pretty well and provided several examples of positive movement on major indicators. He also discussed some of the challenges, many of which are tied to a slowly declining population.

*David van den Berg, Executive Director of Downtown Association of Fairbanks (DTA)* – D. van den Berg shared that he had assembled a list of areawide economic development policy initiatives taken by various local organizations and municipalities, and that the newspaper had recently published a similar article. He stated that the City Council had done a great job on a number of things, with the acquisition and demolition of the Polaris Building being a prime example of the work being done that aligns with his organization's goals for development in the downtown area. He expressed curiosity in what kind of surface would be in place for the interim at the Polaris's empty lot. **Mayor Pruhs** indicated that it would be D1 gravel.

**Mr. Cleworth** thanked him for his report and the positive summary that had been provided.

**Mr. Marney** asked how the core downtown area fared over the past summer. D. van den Berg reported that there had been a fair amount of pedestrian traffic between visitors and locals and that the Golden Heart Plaza had a more positive, safer feeling of being under control. He discussed vacancies and newer tenants among the retail shops along Second Avenue and noted that downtown is still very dependent on tourists and visitors. **Mr. Marney** asked how the annual summer solstice festival had been. D. van den Berg recounted that the event is incredibly dependent on the weather and that this year was just about perfect, leading to a successful festival.

**Mayor Pruhs** asked if he would take an initiative to the DTA and requested they come up with an idea of how to revitalize the Carnahan Building. He explained that the City had put a lot of work



into the area of First through Third Avenue and that it was time to expand their focus further, with the Carnahan Building being the perfect candidate given its location between Fourth and Fifth Avenue. He asserted that D. van den Berg was the best person to head this up. D. van den Berg stated that he would take the request to his Board of Directors and follow up.

Victor Buberger – V. Buberger stated that he had read a recent article in the newspaper that criticized the Mayor and Councilmember Sprinkle for things related to the Polaris Building project. He shared that he had been following the progress of the building for many years, that the process of how it came to the current situation was beyond his comprehension, but that he believed Mayor Pruhs knew a lot more about it than anyone else. He predicted that there would be many ideas coming forward for what should now happen on that property and that some of them would likely put the City into significant debt. V. Buberger suggested that the City be willing to let the lot sit empty for a time, throw some dirt and grass seed out, and let it become a tea garden for a year or two while the community thinks about what it wants. He encouraged them to not rush anything.

Gene Salzman, Sr. – G. Salzman discussed problems with a speed gauge that is mounted on a light post along Ivy Drive but blocked by overgrown hedges. He reported that he had contacted the Public Works Department multiple times over the last few months, as well as in past years for the same issue, but that it was still not resolved despite being given a commitment that it would be. He expressed frustration that safety was not being prioritized, adding that the diminishment of police patrols through their neighborhood had also been noticed.

**Mayor Pruhs** recounted that he had spoken with G. Salzman the previous Friday and confirmed that the City Engineer would follow up regarding the issue with the speed gauge.

Charity Gadapee, Director of Visitor and Community Engagement for Explore Fairbanks – C. Gadapee provided an update on visitation numbers to the Morris Thompson Cultural Center for the summer season. She reported on the numerous community engagement endeavors that the organization had undertaken thus far in the year, including a recent announcement of award winners for a combined \$100,000 in grants to local programs.

Brenda McFarlane, Crisis Now Coordinator. – B. McFarlane provided an update on the Crisis Center, noting that it was National 988 Day, which highlights the importance of providing compassionate help, anytime, anywhere. She reviewed the type of services available within the Fairbanks area and asserted that the City is positioned better than it ever had been for appropriate and less costly responses to those in need. She expressed confidence that a crisis stabilization center would be operational within the next year, citing a recent conversation with the Chief Operational Officer of Alaska Behavioral Health.

**Ms. Sprinkle** asked if a location for the stabilization center had been chosen. B. McFarlane stated that Alaska Behavioral Health had a few options being reviewed but that nothing had been finalized or publicly disclosed at the moment.

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

## **APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA**

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

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

Clerk Snider read the consent agenda into the record.

### **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
5262	Aha Oriental Kitchen	Restaurant/Eating Place	Moonstone, LLC	996 Blair Road
5585	Jazz Bistro on 4th	Restaurant/Eating Place	Bluenote Create, Inc.	527 4th Avenue, B
6080	KC's Kitchen	Restaurant/Eating Place	Curt Michael Haley	1707 S. Cushman Street
2847	HooDoo Brewing Co.	Beverage Dispensary	Fairbanks Fermentation, LLC	1951 Fox Avenue
3687	Thai House Restaurant	Restaurant/Eating Place	Boonchoo, Inc.	412 5th Avenue

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

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

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

YEAS: Marney, Cleworth, Therrien, Sprinkle, Ringstad, 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
11051	Northlink, LLC	Standard Marijuana Cultivation Facility	Northlink, LLC	1550 Cushman Street, Suite B
11053	True Dank, LLC	Retail Marijuana Store	True Dank, LLC	1550 Cushman Street, Suite A

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



**Mayor Pruhs** called for public testimony.

Fritz Wazniak – F. Wazniak shared that he owns a business across the street from the location of the two applicants and that the smell can be unbearable at times. He stated that he was under the impression that there were requirements regarding odor containment and asked what expectations were in place. He cited similar problems for another store further down South Cushman Street.

**Mayor Pruhs** explained the problems that had been discovered and since rectified with the filtration system of the business further down South Cushman Street. He stated that this was the first complaint he was aware of for the applicants being considered and outlined the steps he takes upon receiving such feedback. He committed to visiting the owner and discussing ways to ensure compliance with the requirements for odor containment.

**Ms. Sprinkle** asked which business he owned in the area. F. Wazniak indicated that he owns Midtown Market. **Mayor Pruhs** added that he would follow up with F. Wazniak personally in the coming week and concurred that neither he nor his customers should have to experience the smell.

Victor Buberger – V. Buberger shared that he smoked marijuana from his teen years and quit around the year 2000. He expressed great fondness for the smell of cannabis and wished that it could be bottled up and available to spray in his own home.

There being no more comments, **Mayor Pruhs** closed the public hearing.

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

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

NAYS: None

**Mayor Pruhs** declared the MOTION CARRIED.

### **MAYOR'S COMMENTS AND REPORT**

**Mayor Pruhs** asked Public Information Officer Teal Soden to provide an update on recruitment at the Fairbanks Police Department (FPD).

T. Soden provided a detailed breakdown of the number of applicants for 2024 and year-to-date 2025, noting the number who pass the written exam, are interviewed, hired, etc. and whether they were entry-level or lateral transfers. She reported that they currently have eight vacant positions plus two officers who are retiring and on terminal leave. She noted that two additional officers would be retiring in 2026 and thus the progress they had made in hiring over the last two years was currently only keeping up with retirements. She shared details of the work performed by those involved with the recruitment and hiring process at FPD and acknowledged that a lot of effort is put in just to net a few new officers for the department each year. T. Soden reported that they had expanded their ride-along program from only being available to active applicants to allow active and retired servicemembers who are considered a career in law enforcement, or for potential lateral transfers who may be visiting Fairbanks for other reasons. She declared that this change in ride-along policy had resulted in several applications. T. Soden discussed the challenges they face with recruitment such as the extreme climate, unique culture, high cost of living, a reduced advertising



budget, and more. She asserted that they do the best with what they have and thanked the Council for their support of FPD, noting various incentives that had been added in recent years. She reiterated that it was an uphill battle but stated that they are moving in the right direction.

**Mr. Ringstad** asked how many people they had brought on in the last two years. T. Soden summarized that between 2024 and 2025 seven total officers had been hired, five of which were lateral transfers, but that one of the entry-level individuals had resigned within their first week at the academy in Sitka. **Mr. Ringstad** acknowledged that while they are making headway, it did seem like a frequently moving target. T. Soden noted that they often play the long game with potential recruits from the military who sometimes reach out up to a year before they are out.

**Mr. Marney** asked if she had any other suggestions for what the Council could do to help assist with recruitment at FPD. T. Soden shared that when they speak to potential hires, they appreciate hearing that the department has the support of the community and the City Council. She stated that in recent years, the department has given officers the opportunity to grow in areas they desire which has been rewarding. She indicated that funds for training and advertising are very important.

**Mayor Pruhs** asked City Engineer Robert Pristash to give an outline on the remaining schedule for the Polaris Building project.

R. Pristash reported that the last of the contaminated concrete had been hauled away and the pit where the building's basement used to exist was now filled in to ensure structural integrity for the block. He shared that a layer of gravel would be put down and topped with Recycled Asphalt Product (RAP), which is ground up asphalt and contains binding materials. He noted that this is a step up from D1 gravel and while it would not be paved, it would be hard and durable. R. Pristash reviewed the remaining tasks to be completed around the property and the contractors lined up to perform the work. He gave a breakdown of the overall project costs for each phase and shared that they would be finishing on time and under budget.

**Ms. Sprinkle** asked if the surface would be permeable. R. Pristash stated that gravel with a RAP layer is somewhat permeable and loose. He pointed out that even regular asphalt is permeable.

**Mayor Pruhs** asked Fire Chief Andrew Cocco to give an update on the expansion of personnel at the Fairbanks Fire Department (FFD).

Chief Cocco stated that the hard work of the Mayor and City Council to support FFD and expand staffing had come to a positive conclusion. He shared that the remaining 10 vacancies had been filled and that the recent sign-on bonus to entice applicants with existing paramedic training had been a huge success. He acknowledged that they needed to get folks onboarded and begin internal training processes but declared that FFD was fully staffed for the first time in a long time. Chief Cocco thanked all those who were part of the team effort of recruitment and pointed out that it helped when applicants see that they have excellent facilities and equipment, along with support from the community, City administration, and Council.

**Mayor Pruhs** referenced a packet of documents that had been provided to Councilmembers regarding the property located at 1875 Willow Street. He noted that the property is expected to be deeded over to the City but that they are beginning the abatement process in the meantime. He reported that the overall project is estimated to cost \$120,000 to \$140,000 but that this amount



included tipping fees which would likely be getting waived. He stated that if the City ended up acquiring the property he would prepare a more detailed report for the Council to review and decide how they would like to proceed. **Mayor Pruhs** pointed out that the property includes two lots and would be considered a premium value property given its location along the Noyes Slough. He predicted that the sale of the property might cover the entire cost of the project and that they would begin the abatement work in the following week.

**Mr. Ringstad** asked if there was a viable structure on the property. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that for all intents and purposes, there was not. He added that the property had been a repeat offender over the last few decades.

**Ms. Sprinkle** noted that there were several vehicles left on the property and asked if any could be sold to recover some of the cost of abatement. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that this would be determined by Public Work Director Jeremiah Cotter. He suggested that many neighbors of the property would likely be happy with the City after the abatement is complete, pointing out that other properties around it are quite nice. He reiterated that it would be a highly sought-after lot.

**Mayor Pruhs** reported that he and Chief of Staff Michael Sanders had traveled to Anchorage recently to visit with the Katie Ringsmuth with the Alaska Office of History & Archaeology to discuss creating a historical river travel corridor under the National Register of Historic Places, from the City-owned log cabin on Cushman to the Pump House Restaurant and Saloon. He shared that K. Ringsmuth would be in Fairbanks later in the month and was willing to meet again. He explained that anytime a property is placed on the register the value goes up, however they would not be prohibited from tearing a structure down in the future provided no federal grant money had been awarded. **Mr. Ringstad** contested these parameters, citing his own experience with the Register. **Mayor Pruhs** suggested that Mr. Ringstad may have been misinformed. He stated that the owner of The Boatel Bar had also expressed interest in this idea and that the City may want to consider it for the log cabin. He added that representatives from the Yukon Quest had conveyed that they would likely be moving out of the cabin at some point, at which time the City would need to make a decision as to the future of the building.

**Ms. Sprinkle** asked if K. Ringsmuth was willing to meet with the Council. **Mayor Pruhs** clarified that she was visiting for an engagement at the university but may be open to meeting with them and that he would reach out to make the request.

### **COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS**

**Ms. Tidwell** and **Mr. Marney** each indicated they had no comments

**Mr. Ringstad** stated that the best part of serving on the Council for the last three years had been the good working group relationship they have, whether they agree on issues or not. He suggested that the public had come to expect this of them and that while politics are trending towards less respect in moments of disagreement, the Council should strive to remain the exception. He recounted that he had missed the previous week's Work Session but had heard and read several reports of things that had transpired which, to him, seem unnecessary and inappropriate. **Mr. Ringstad** explained that he was referring to discussions about the Polaris Working Group and suggestions they had engaged in improper activities. He asserted that the group had firmly adhered to all applicable laws under the Alaska Open Meetings Act and that the continued questions and



concerns raised about how they have handled business are disappointing. He spoke of working with good leaders in business and government over the last 40 plus years, as well as some not so good ones, and that the best leaders start with a plan, do their homework, and bring a proposal forward to the appropriate decision-making body. **Mr. Ringstad** declared that Mayor Pruhs had been following this approach for over 10 years with regards to the Polaris Building and that himself and Ms. Sprinkle had been fortunate to be involved with the development of a plan to bring before the Council. He stated that it is inaccurate to suggest that anything else had occurred or that any of them had done something wrong. He asserted that they have a responsibility to maintain decorum and not put out innuendos that are otherwise motivated. He expressed hope that such a thing never happens again because he considers it completely unacceptable.

**Ms. Sprinkle** stated she had no comments.

**Ms. Therrien** gave a land acknowledgement. She expressed appreciation to the Mayor and other staff members for the Work Session on the Polaris Building which had occurred earlier in the evening and that she hopes they keep those meetings open.

**Mr. Cleworth** spoke to the issue of excessive odors from marijuana-based businesses within the city. He noted that they have only ever had issues with a few locations and shared details about past situations the Council had addressed. He affirmed that they appreciate the type of input brought by F. Wazniak, that they take concerns seriously, and will seek remedies.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- a) 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. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

**Mr. Marney**, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6323.

**Mayor Pruhs** called for public testimony.

Miguel Ramirez – M. Ramirez voiced opposition to Ordinance No. 6323. He gave a brief summary of his military background and having witnessed the results of communism and socialism across the world. He stated that he does not appreciate being told what he can and cannot do on his own property and pointed out that Fairbanks is not the same as Anchorage, Alaska or San Diego, California. He asserted that political signs do no hurt anyone and fall under the constitutional rights protected by the First Amendment. M. Ramirez declared that whatever side of the political forum one stands on, campaign signs exist to show support for the few people in their generation who will step up and run for office. He suggested that signs are also a way to show investment in future leaders. He shared that he had read a recent article that suggested some campaign signs had been up for almost a year. He pointed out that no current candidates for local elections had signs up a year ago, although he just recently saw a sign for State Senator Scott Kawasaki being taken down, despite his election taking place last fall. M. Ramirez reiterated that this was a matter of constitutional rights and that the Council should do the right thing.



Nicole Amy Moore – N. Amy Moore shared that she lives on Cowles Street in a home her parents purchased decades ago, noting the importance of grandfather rights being considered when significant laws are enacted. She stated that they are proud to provide a location for candidates to place signs, particularly those without deep pockets who are running a grassroots campaign. She suggested that the Ordinance could be viewed as an attack on certain socioeconomic categories. N. Amy Moore called attention to a past lawsuit against the State of Alaska Department of Transportation (DOT) by the campaign of then-gubernatorial candidate Mike Dunleavy and others, where the State lost and was required to pay out quite a bit of money. She asked how much the City can afford to pay in legal fees to push through and enforce the Ordinance. She asserted that it seems as though certain candidates were being targeted.

Charles Moore – C. Moore stated that Ordinance No. 6323 was a blatant violation of First Amendment rights and the City could expect to be sued if it goes through, citing past rulings by the Alaska Supreme Court. He suggested that the Council does not want to go down this road and that doing so would violate the Oath of Office they had all taken.

Barbara Haney – B. Haney stated that she lives outside of the City and although she serves on the Borough Assembly she was speaking at her own behest. She shared that she is an economist by trade but has had to become versed in many legal matters over the years. She cited court cases that deal with signage laws and constitutional rights, pointing out that the best example was the case mentioned earlier by N. Amy Moore, which made it clear that political signs are a form of protected speech. B. Haney asserted that campaign signs are an important component of the democratic process and that if they start to violate the First Amendment, it will become a slippery slope that the City does not want to go down. She pointed out that the Ordinance seeks to restrict signage placement to June through November and that while some have suggested that her own campaign signs had been out for much longer than that, she had documentation that proves they were only put up on Memorial Day weekend. She added that signs within city limits were actually not placed until later in June. B. Haney discussed her role as the Chair of the Regional Emergency Services Committee and the heavy fire season that had occurred over the summer.

**Ms. Sprinkle** asked if she was aware that the Borough has a similar Ordinance in place. B. Haney stated that the Court had struck down those regulations in 2018.

**Mayor Pruhs** asked if she felt that the Ordinance specifically targeted her. B. Haney stated that she kind of does, although she noticed when she was putting out her signs that some individuals such as Scott Kawasaki and Savannah Fletcher still had campaign signage up all around the Borough, even though the election they were a part of had occurred back in November. She asserted that the Ordinance violates three Constitutional Amendments and that while she does feel that Ms. Sprinkle's Ordinance was targeting her, it also targeted individuals like S. Kawasaki.

**Ms. Sprinkle** noted the Ordinance's timeframe of June through November and asked if she had any problem with having her signs taken down in November. B. Haney stated that she is not running for State Office and that local elections are done in October. She asserted that she is almost always able to secure a truck and have her signs removed by mid-October. She pointed out that candidates for State elections, which take place in November, would be affected differently. She suggested that the dates really do not matter because they also occasionally have special elections which can occur at any time and that signage for such might violate the terms of Ordinance 6323.



Jeannie Olson – J. Olson shared that she loves how Alaska is unique in its laws prohibiting billboards and that she is reminded of this anytime she drives around other states. She recognized that political signs are not the same as commercial advertising and are constitutionally protected but noted that there is a difference between having a right to do something versus what is the right thing to do. She suggested that it is becoming increasingly more common for people to want to exercise a right without considering the impact of their actions on others. J. Olson stated that she is also running for election to the Borough Assembly but that she chose not to begin active campaigning until the previous Saturday. She explained that she believes 30 days should be all that is needed for campaigning in a small election and that she intends to have her signs all taken down within 48 hours after the election.

Hannah Ekalook – H. Ekalook spoke in opposition to Ordinance No. 6323 and the creation of what she would call a “sign season”. She stated that yard signs are accessible ways for people to participate in democracy and show support for candidates or causes. She confirmed that she is running for City Council and doing so with limited resources which is why she relies on yard signs being proudly displayed by neighbors in their own yards. She asserted that taking away this right only silences community voices and hurts grassroot efforts, not big money campaigns. H. Ekalook suggested that the Ordinance also supports government overreach, labeling political signs as visual litter and a public nuisance, while allowing the City power to enter private property to remove signs at the owner’s expense, with disposal discretion. She noted that some elected officials leave their signs up year-round and that the City should focus on solving real problems rather than restricting free speech and civic engagement. H. Ekalook urged the Council to reject the Ordinance, ensure that all candidates have a fair chance to be heard regardless of resources, and instead spend time on policies that strengthen democracy and property rights.

Fritz Wazniak – F. Wazniak stated that he opposes the Ordinance and that common sense dictates candidates be responsible to take down their signs after an election and that they did not need to pass restrictive laws on the matter. He acknowledged that he has a prime piece of real estate on 15th Avenue and that he gets a lot of requests from candidates to place their signs. He shared that he often says yes, with the understanding that they remove the signs promptly after election day. He reiterated that this was a commonsense issue not requiring legislation and enforcement.

Cynthia Wazniak – C. Wazniak stated that she agrees with what has been said by previous commentors and asked the Council to vote against Ordinance No. 6323. She explained that it is their right to display signs and their responsibility to take them down, and that the Ordinance infringes upon rights protected under multiple constitutional amendments.

There being no more comments, **Mayor Pruhs** closed the public hearing.

**Ms. Sprinkle** stated that she was not targeting any particular candidate with the Ordinance. She explained that she approached the issue with a desire to have a conversation, not set anything on fire. She noted that her job as a Councilmember is to bring forth concerns and ideas shared with her by citizens she was elected to represent. She expressed gratitude for those who shared their thoughts. She referenced comments about the legality of laws regarding political signs and asked for the City Attorney to weigh in on whether those sections of Borough Code were not legal.

City Attorney Thomas Chard explained that the case from 2018 that had been referenced by individuals during Public Testimony provides that small, temporary campaign signs, no larger than



32 square feet, can be located on private property. He noted that the question at hand is the definition of “temporary” and that the Borough law, which is still active, defines temporary as being from the months of June through November. He pointed out that while political signs are viewed separately, the existing laws do still apply to other non-political, temporary signs, which would not include flags or those affixed to a permanent structure.

**Mr. Ringstad** stated that he agrees with the comments about constitutional rights, commonsense expectations to remove signs after an election, and elections sometimes happen outside of the ascribed timeframe. He suggested that it says something when candidates leave signs out all year.

**Mr. Cleworth** expressed being hung up on the definition of a temporary sign. He asked if he would be in violation if he placed a small sign in his yard that said, “Have a good day”, and kept it up for more than 90 days. Attorney Chard confirmed that, according to the language of the Ordinance, he would. **Mr. Cleworth** stated that he would obviously have a problem with that. He discussed how laws exist which prohibit smoking within a certain distance of a business’s entrance, though they are never enforced. He noted State and Federal laws regarding signs not being permitted within a certain distance of roadways. Attorney Chard confirmed that this was the State law challenged by the American Civil Liberties Union, resulting in the ruling that, while political signs may not be placed within the right-of-way, placement on private property is protected regardless of the distance from the road. **Mr. Cleworth** pointed out that a lot of signs exist along Airport Way and asked if any of them are unlawful. Attorney Chard reported that he had spoken with individuals at the DOT who confirmed that if they receive a complaint of any signage within the DOT right-of-way, they will attempt to contact the individual to direct that it be removed but will take action to do so if the owner does not rectify the situation. He explained that Ordinance No. 6323 had utilized a similar approach. He stated that a primary challenge for many is that it is often unclear where the right-of-way starts and stops. **Mr. Cleworth** expressed appreciation for Ms. Sprinkle’s effort on the issue but reiterated that there were problematic aspects to the Ordinance.

**Mr. Marney** indicated that he could not support the Ordinance but was grateful for the opportunity to have a discussion on the topic. He concurred that he has seen signs up as early as April that year and that they should be picked up within two weeks after the election.

**Mayor Pruhs** recounted how, after his first campaign, he was unable to remove a larger sign because it had fallen over and frozen into the ground, for which he got a lot of flak. He acknowledged that most candidates try to remove their signs as quickly as they can and that those who do not are outliers. He expressed appreciation for Ms. Sprinkle initiating the discussion.

**Ms. Sprinkle** thanked the Council for the conversation. She reiterated that she felt it was her job to convey what was being brought to her and that she hopes no hard feelings would remain.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6323 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: None

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

**Mayor Pruhs** declared the MOTION FAILED and  
Ordinance No. 6323 FAILED.

- b) Ordinance No. 6324 – An Ordinance Enacting Fairbanks General Code Section 2-65, Chief of Staff Authorities. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

**Ms. Sprinkle**, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6324.

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

**Mr. Cleworth**, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6324 by substituting the amended, proposed version.

**Mayor Pruhs** called for objection to the motion to AMEND Ordinance No. 6324 by substituting the amended, proposed version and, seeing none, declared the MOTION CARRIED.

Chief of Staff Michael Sanders discussed temporary scenarios where both himself and the Mayor might be unavailable to perform regular day-to-day duties and that this would officially give him the ability to continue the practice that has been in place of designating someone to fill in for him.

**Mr. Cleworth** explained that the proposed substitute which he had put together cleaned up one additional item. He shared that such a scenario had happened when he was the Mayor and that they always had a third person in line for temporary delegation of authorities.

**Clerk Snider** noted that Mr. Cleworth was not listed as a co-sponsor of the amended Ordinance and asked if such was his intent. **Mr. Cleworth** indicated that doing so was not necessary.

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

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

NAYS: None

**Mayor Pruhs** declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6324, as Amended, ADOPTED.

- c) 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. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

**Ms. Sprinkle**, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6325.

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

**Mr. Ringstad**, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6325 by substituting the amended, proposed version.

**Mayor Pruhs** called for objection to the motion to AMEND Ordinance No. 6325 by substituting the amended, proposed



version and, seeing none, declared the MOTION CARRIED.

M. Sanders affirmed that nothing had change from what had been discussed in their last Work Session and that the proposed substitute was in response to concerns from Mr. Cleworth regarding compensation aspects within the Ordinance.

**Ms. Sprinkle** recounted that a concern had also been raised about the definition of the office of Mayor becoming “vacant” and asked if that had been addressed.

**Mr. Cleworth** noted that the Whereas statements cite sections from the City’s Charter and Fairbanks General Code that give instructions for designating a position as vacant and that it requires Councilmember approval. He shared that he had worked on the proposed substitute with the City Attorney but had additional thoughts and concerns since then. He explained that the two scenarios to consider are when the office is vacated within six months of a regular election versus greater than six months. He asked how long they would have to perform a special election in the event a vacancy occurs with more than six months left in the position’s term. Clerk Snider stated that she would review the Charter to check the timeframe for special elections as described.

**Mr. Cleworth** discussed the other scenario, where the vacancy would be within six months of a regular election and that the new logistics, according to the Ordinance, would require the Councilmember with the longest total period of tenure to resign their own Council seat to assume the office of mayor pro tempore, rather than just that of acting mayor. He pointed out that if this Councilmember was not elected as Mayor in the special election that followed, they could lose the remainder of their original term on the Council, which could be one or even two full years, simply due to filling in as mayor pro tempore. He asked if it was appropriate for someone to lose their seat on the Council in this way.

Attorney Chard explained that there are firm State statutes that would prohibit someone from holding more than one office and thus the resignation caveat as described by Mr. Cleworth was correct. He clarified that the City’s Charter currently allows for the Council to designate someone who was not an elected Councilmember to serve in this temporary position but that Ordinance No. 6323 would change that. He concurred that language addressing compensation should be clearer.

**Mayor Pruhs** stated that when a Councilmember resigns their seat to fill in, their position is filled by mayoral appointment, with a confirmation vote by the Council. He acknowledged that this creates a can of worms for the individual who had to make the switch as there would be no guarantee that they would be elected to any position in the subsequent election.

**Ms. Therrien** asked whether State law dictates if they must appoint a Councilmember or if it can be someone else. Attorney Chard clarified that the statute allows for either option but reiterated that if they fill the vacancy with an existing Councilmember, that individual must resign their existing seat. He confirmed that they could still run in the next election for their former position.

**Mr. Cleworth** discussed other significant problems that would be created due to existing union contracts and certain benefits associated with the mayoral position which require payment but may never be realized as the time it takes to become vested is greater than the likely length of service in the temporary position. He asserted that these are not hypothetical concerns and that he had personal experience with the matter. He suggested there may be other ways around it with

additional changes to their Code or further discussion with the union. **Mr. Cleworth** reiterated that these were some of the bigger question marks that came up for him even after the changes within the proposed substitute and that it really is a quagmire. He added that, with such a short timeframe being considered for a vacancy, the Chief of Staff and other experienced department heads are highly qualified and could continue managing the business of the City. He suggested that they may be going overboard on something that may have a simpler solution.

**Mayor Pruhs** noted that if the temporary duties fell to the Chief of Staff, they would retain their current, higher salary, along with all regular benefits, while still answering to the City Council.

**Ms. Therrien**, seconded by **Mr. Cleworth**, moved to POSTPONE Ordinance No. 6325, as Amended, to the next Regular Meeting, with a Work Session in between.

Clerk Snider reported that the Fairbanks General Code states a specific timeframe for a special election pertaining to a citizens' initiative or referendum after the required number of signatures had been gathered and is certified. She noted, however, that it does not provide guidelines for a special election related to a vacancy of the mayor's office.

**Mr. Cleworth** spoke in favor of postponement.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO POSTPONE ORDINANCE NO. 6325, AS AMENDED, TO THE NEXT REGULAR MEETING, WITH A WORK SESSION IN BETWEEN, AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

**Mayor Pruhs** declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6325, as Amended, POSTPONED.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

- a) Resolution No. 5185 – A Resolution Approving Updates to the City of Fairbanks Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- b) Ordinance No. 6326 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Section 14-433 Rotation Tow List Eligibility Requirements. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

ADVANCED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- c) Ordinance No. 6327 – An Ordinance Enacting Fairbanks General Code Chapter 25 Emergency Operations. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA



## **WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TO THE CITY COUNCIL**

- a) Chena Riverfront Commission Meeting Minutes of April 23, 2025

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- b) Clay Street Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes of August 6, 2025

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- c) Memorandum to Approve the Appointment of 2025 Election Officials

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS AND COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS**

**Ms. Therrien** explained that she was attending the meeting remotely due to testing positive for COVID and that while she was feeling better, she stayed home out of an abundance of caution. She reported that she would be absent for the next Work Session and Regular Meeting due to travel and asked to be excused.

**Mr. Marney** shared that he had attended the last Board of Directors meeting for Explore Fairbanks and heard updates about downtown. He added that he also attended the Fairbanks Diversity Council's last meeting and that they would be hosting a Human Library event later in the month.

**Ms. Tidwell** stated that she had no comments and nothing to report.

**Mr. Cleworth**, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to EXCUSE Ms. Therrien from the Regular Work Session of September 23, 2025 and the Regular Meeting of September 29, 2025.

**Mayor Pruhs** called for objection to the motion to EXCUSE Ms. Therrien from the Regular Work Session of September 23, 2025 and the Regular Meeting of September 29, 2025 and, seeing none, declared the MOTION CARRIED.

**Mr. Cleworth** discussed abandoned vehicles within the downtown parking structure and noted that, to his understanding, all necessary paperwork had been completed and the ball was in the City's court to go remove the vehicles. He thanked the Fire Chief for providing a recent report of call numbers for the Fairbanks Fire Department.

**Ms. Sprinkle** stated that she has quite a bit of homework after recent meetings. She noted that the Chamber of Commerce Government Relations Committee, which she serves on, would be meeting soon. She reported that she had attended the last Borough Assembly meeting as the City Council representative and that it had been a long meeting with a lot of work pertaining to zoning. She shared that there would be a Finance Committee meeting later in the month and that they would be having interesting conversations related to lotteries.

**Mr. Ringstad** stated that he had no comments and nothing to report.

### CITY CLERK'S REPORT

Clerk Snider provided additional details about the Human Library event being organized by the Fairbanks Diversity Council. She pointed out that the Council had previously amended the regular schedule of meetings and thus the next Regular Work Session would be in two weeks and the next Regular Meeting would be three weeks away. She shared that the annual Election Information Pamphlet had been published online, with printed copies available at the Clerk's Office.

### CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Attorney Chard stated that he had nothing to report.

### ADJOURNMENT

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

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

**Mayor Pruhs** declared the meeting adjourned at 8:48 p.m.



  
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DAVID PRUHS, MAYOR

ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
D. DANYELLE SNIDER, MMC, CITY CLERK

Transcribed by: CC