



DISCRETIONARY FUND COMMITTEE AGENDA
NOVEMBER 12, 2025, 12:00 P.M.
HELD VIA [TELECONFERENCE](#) AND AT
FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
800 CUSHMAN STREET, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA



PRELIMINARY MEETING

1. Roll Call
2. Approval of Meeting Minutes – January 8, 2025
3. New Business
 - a) Introduction of Committee Members
 - b) Report from Chair Marney
 - c) Committee Policies and Procedures (tardiness, absences, presentation format, etc.)
 - d) Financial Report by Sarah Fuerst, Grants Administrator
4. Committee Member Comments
5. Date of Next Meetings – Presentation and Distribution meeting dates to be determined by the Committee
6. Adjournment

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DISCRETIONARY FUND COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES, JANUARY 8, 2025, 10:00 A.M.
HELD VIA [TELECONFERENCE](#) AND AT
FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
800 CUSHMAN STREET, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA



The Discretionary Fund Committee convened at 9:59 a.m. on the above date to conduct a Wrap-up Meeting at the City Council Chambers, 800 Cushman Street, Fairbanks, Alaska, and via Zoom with Council Member **Lonny Marney (Seat F)** presiding and with the following members in attendance:

Members Present: Karen Blackburn, Seat A
Thomas Alexander, Seat B
Samantha Kirstein, Seat C
Traci Gatewood, Seat D
Victoria Dowling, Seat E

Also Present: Diana Hebel, Licensing Clerk / Cashier
Dani Snider, City Clerk
Sarah Fuerst, Grants Administrator

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

a) Approval of Meeting Minutes – December 6, 2024

Ms. Kirstein, seconded by **Ms. Blackburn**, moved to APPROVE the meeting minutes.

There being no objection, the minutes were APPROVED.

NEW BUSINESS

a) Review of Discretionary Fund Grant Application and Committee Process

1. Application Letter for 2025

Chair Marney stated that this will be his last year as Committee chair. He proposed that the application letter remain the same this year, and whoever succeeds him as chair can change it if they wish.

2. Setting a Request Limit

Chair Marney asked Ms. Kirstein to do her presentation.

Ms. Kirstein explained that in her experience with grant-writing, most grants set a limit on how much can be requested, and some grants disqualify applicants who request more than the limit. She expressed concern that some new applicants have indicated higher amounts than usual on their

applications, which may encourage some of the other applicants to ask for higher amounts in the future. She suggested that the Committee ask applicants to be reasonable with their requests.

Mr. Alexander agreed with the idea of setting a limit but was unsure what the limit should be.

Ms. Gatewood agreed with Ms. Kirstein and said that in state and federal grants, it clearly states that if you ask for more than the limit, it triggers an automatic disqualification. She stated that she assumes people know there are limited discretionary funds and suggested making that clearer on the application rather than enforcing an exact dollar amount limit.

Ms. Blackburn agreed with stressing that there are limited funds and indicated that it would be hard to set a dollar limit because applicants' needs vary. She noted, however, that the committee had not given anyone over \$40,000, so a limit of \$45,000 could be considered.

Ms. Dowling expressed her opinion that applicants are reasonable and only a few are asking for more because it does not hurt to do so.

Ms. Kirstein shared some concerns about an organization that shares their grant funding with up to 14 organizations, and questioned whether or not they should be eligible for the Discretionary Fund Grant. She expressed concern regarding another organization that wished to withhold information when asked from what source they receive other funding. She pointed out that another applicant sought funds for a restoration project but should have been more specific in their request.

Ms. Blackburn agreed with Ms. Kirstein's reasoning but asked what process would be followed for applicants that need to modify their plans or budget.

Chair Marney asked for the opinion of Ms. Fuerst. Ms. Fuerst explained that if the Finance Department needed to make a change to the budget for a grant-funded City project, they would have to apply to the grantor for a formal amendment.

Clerk Snider shared that such a process has never been considered and that if the Committee wished to go in that direction, the authority for approval of such amendments would need to be established.

Chair Marney commented that the letter could be changed to indicate that funds are limited and that applications should be specific in regard to the intended use of the funds.

Mr. Alexander recommended that returning applicants should ask for the same amount that they received the prior year, or for no more than 5 or 10 percent over what they received the prior year.

Ms. Kirstein indicated that that makes sense to her and reiterated that she would like to see more detail from applicants about what the funds would be used for.

Chair Marney asked if the budget narrative section of the application asks for that detail. Ms. Fuerst explained that the responses must be detailed enough so that their reports and back-up expenditures match up with what they included in their application.

There was discussion on whether asking for more detail was worth discussing, what kinds of detail the Committee should be asking for, and whether or not certain things, such as salaries, were okay to ask for in a grant. Ms. Fuerst clarified that organizations do a good job of explaining the duties and necessity of salaried positions when indicating that grant funding would be used for salaries.

Ms. Kirstein and **Ms. Blackburn** expressed that they would both like to see more transparency in the use of funds because it helps the Committee determine if granting the funds makes projects successful.

Chair Marney indicated that he would meet with Ms. Fuerst, Ms. Bell, and Clerk Snider and figure out what should be tuned up on the application and the letter.

Ms. Gatewood indicated that the Committee decided that when there was a deficiency in an application, it would adhere to the set policies and procedures. She suggested that the Committee agree to continue to adhere to the policies and procedures previously set unless there are changes.

Some discussion was had on how many people complained about last year's process versus how many complained about the process in the most recent cycle. **Chair Marney** reminded the Committee that there is a Q&A session offered for applicants and that the Finance Department has doors and phone lines open for any questions leading up to the due date for applications, so there should be no excuse for application errors.

In regard to Fairbanks Arts Association's unique application on behalf of multiple organizations, **Chair Marney** expressed his wish to remove that entity from the Discretionary Fund grant process and instead, set them up for a set amount of funding each year, as is done with the Fairbanks Economic Development Corporation (FEDC) and Explore Fairbanks. **Chair Marney** said he would like to partner with others, such as Explore Fairbanks and maybe the Borough.

Ms. Gatewood asked for clarification if the intent is to separate the Fairbanks Arts Association from the grant process, so they would not be a part of the \$400,000 Discretionary Fund grant. **Chair Marney** stated that he would not touch the \$400,000 thousand. He explained how the changes to the room rental tax disbursement was changed and to how the Discretionary Fund was increased. He stated that he envisions the set funding for the Fairbanks Arts Association to come from the leftover funds split between the City and Explore Fairbanks.

Clerk Snider voiced concern as to what would happen if there was not enough revenue to have leftover funds. **Chair Marney** noted that could be a concern, but tourism forecasts are still high.

Ms. Gatewood expressed concern about using funds that are not be guaranteed and stated that the City would need provisions to cover if leftover funds are not available. She expressed curiosity as to how the entity would qualify for the grant if the excess funds became the source. Ms. Fuerst said that CFO Bell would know more about it but clarified that it would not be done by a typical grant application; rather, it would be something that gets audited each year.

There was some discussion on where the money should come from and whether or not to ask the Borough to participate. **Chair Marney** indicated that there is not anything that could be done in 2025 but that the idea could be explored in the future.

Chair Marney expressed concern that the Discretionary Fund Committee is the only City committee in which there is a term limit: two three-year terms. He continued by saying that he has never had anyone ask for favors or gratuities or any of the like. He then asked Committee members if any would be adverse to continuing on after their term is complete. He clarified that he would like the terms to remain at three years but would like to eliminate the term limits.

Ms. Kirstein expressed that when she began, there was a group of people who were on and off the Committee for many years, which led to a culture of not wanting to make the grant process too difficult so that all-volunteer organizations would still qualify. She proposed that the process be made a little more stringent because it produces better applications, making it easier for the Committee to review and understand. She continued that when she first started, it seemed to be a different environment, and since tightening up the process, it has not had a negative effect on the application process. She indicated that making changes and bringing new ideas is a positive thing.

Ms. Dowling asked about turnover on the Committee. **Chair Marney** clarified that a Committee member may resign at any point.

Ms. Kirstein asked Clerk Snider why the Committee is the only one with term limits. Clerk Snider responded that that she does not know except that, even though it is a couple of decades old, it is one of the newer City committees. She stated one could speculate that it is because the Committee deals with money, and they saw a need to keep things fair and fresh when it was created. She stated that the terms of some committees have been increased to five years without term limits.

Chair Marney shared that he does not look forward to no longer serving as the Chair. He asked for another round of comments to finish the discussion.

Ms. Fuerst asked if it would be helpful to include in the application an outline of what is expected on a balance sheet: assets, liabilities, and equity. She offered to present an example of a proper balance sheet during the Q&A session and stated that there are online sources to help people see what a balance sheet should look like. She stated that while she is not seeking perfection, those items should be included in the balance sheet.

Chair Marney asked for closing comments.

Members spoke about how much they enjoy serving on the Committee and expressed appreciation for working with the group.

NEXT MEETING – NOVEMBER 2025

Chair Marney asked if a date should be chosen or if a Doodle Poll at a later time would suffice.

Clerk Snider asked if the Committee should meet before the regular November meeting. She also asked for clarification on what the Committee decided on for a limit and how to proceed with changes to the application before the 2025-2026 season. She clarified that these decisions, including any changes to the application, cannot be decided over email.

Ms. Kirstein asked that a vote be taken right away regarding setting a limit.

Chair Marney says the only problem he has with setting a limit is taking into account the “big hitters” such as ICE Alaska and the Yukon Quest. He questioned how to arrive at a dollar amount.

Ms. Kirstein suggested using categories.

Mr. Alexander stated that organizations should show some restraint in the amount they apply for. He stated that it seems reasonable for an organization to apply for a small percentage more than their prior year’s request.

Ms. Dowling spoke in support of Mr. Alexander’s idea. She stated that the Committee could allow a 5% increase in the request amount, and if an applicant wanted to ask for more, they would need to provide an explanation for the increased request.

Ms. Gatewood expressed concern with using a percentage because it could cause applicants to feel locked into doing the same thing from year to year. She stated that if they have an innovative idea or the environment changes, applicants should have some flexibility.

Mr. Alexander reminded the group that there is a broad range of amounts requested each year. He stated that using a number instead of a percentage will either restrict the applicants with larger requests or cause smaller organizations to seek larger amounts.

Clerk Snider indicated that if the Committee decided to set a limit by percentage, they would also need to consider whether to set a limit for new applicants.

Ms. Kirstein stated that anyone should be allowed to request an amount between \$1 and \$10,000, and if they sought more, they would need to put more work into their request. **Ms. Dowling** expressed concern that doing so may cause applicants to not request more, even if they need it.

Chair Marney asked for input from Ms. Fuerst since a change would affect her department. Ms. Fuerst stated that it is important to make application requirements clear if the Committee decides to use categories.

Ms. Kirstein commented that the \$1 – \$10,000 category would have a simplified application, and those asking for more would have to include more paperwork, including a list of the board of directors and a straightforward, detailed description of the project.

Mr. Alexander pointed out that in the most recent process only 10 applicants applied for less than \$10,000.

Ms. Gatewood questioned what the request limit should be for the small category. She asked what the cap should be for applicants seeking a larger amount. **Ms. Dowling** suggested setting a limit of \$50,000 for the larger category. **Mr. Alexander** shared that the highest request was for \$41,000.

Ms. Kirstein said that the interesting thing is that some organizations – even some of the larger ones – do not keep records until they find they need them. She stated that simplifying the process for those requesting smaller amounts would help assure they are successful.

Chair Marney stated that the Committee has not arrived at a decision regarding limits. He asked members to give it more thought, and the group could revisit the issue at a future meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Alexander, seconded by **Ms. Kirstein**, moved to ADJOURN the meeting.

Chair Marney declared the meeting ADJOURNED at 10:27 a.m.

Lonny Marney, Chair

Diana Hebel, Licensing Clerk / Cashier

Transcribed by: DH

Discretionary Fund Committee

Policies and Procedures

FGC Requirements (summarized):

- Discretionary Grant Funds will be \$400,000.00.
- Applicants whose Annual Report is not filed by October 31 are ineligible to apply.
 - Final Annual report with all expenditures is due by December 31
- 10% of grant monies from the prior year are withheld until Annual Report is filed with Finance Dept.
- Any organization or person, public or private, may apply for grant monies.
- Applications must be received by City Clerk's Office no later than 5:00 P.M. on October 31.
 - Committee requires applications to be complete and copied upon submittal
- Applicants cannot request funding to support the following:
 - a. Loans, deficits, or debt reduction
 - b. Endowments
 - c. Scholarships
 - d. Health and social services activities
- Grant Guidelines:
 - a. Contribute significantly to the growth and promotion of Fairbanks
 - b. Monies must supplement a successful ongoing program of activities or a new program that will need initial support to accomplish its stated goals
- Scoring procedures and conflicts of interest are decided at the Committee's first organizational meeting each year.
- Committee members send their individual allocations to the Finance Department by a date and time agreed upon by the Committee prior to the distribution meeting.
 - Finance staff will receive members' allocations no later than 10:00 A.M. the day of allocations.
- Each Committee member reads their allocation into the record during the distribution meeting. Allocations are not final until approved by the City Council at the first Council Meeting in January.

Stated in the Minutes:

- If an event or organization creates tourism/economic development for the City of Fairbanks, the entity itself does not have to be within city limits to be eligible for grant funding.
- The presentation meeting will start on time regardless of who is present.
- Presentations may be held in one meeting only.
- Presenters will present in the order applications were received. There will be no exceptions to this rule unless a presenter misses their turn and the Committee allows them to present later in the meeting.
- No specific time slots are allotted, and presenters are encouraged to arrive at the start of the meeting.
- If a Committee member misses any presentations due to absence, they will not be permitted to score any applications.
- Each presenter will be given three minutes to present, and there will be (up to) a seven-minute question and response period following each presentation. Presenters may choose to simply answer questions. At the discretion of the chair, an applicant's question and answer period may be extended.
- No new information may be presented to the Committee members after the October 31 deadline. Electronic presentations and hard copy handouts of any kind are prohibited.
- If three or more Committee members allot a zero allocation at the end of the presentation, the applicant will be eliminated from consideration.
- Committee members must round their allocations to the nearest \$10.
- Late applications will not be accepted by the City Clerk's Office. Incomplete or late applications will not be considered for funding.
- Applicants who are not represented at the presentation meeting will not be considered for funding.
- The original application will serve as the official copy; completeness will be determined by the original.
- Application withdrawals will be allowed until the point of allocation.

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December 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30	1	2 Possible Presentation Meeting 5:00 PM	3 Possible Distribution Meeting 12:00 PM	4 Possible Presentation Meeting 5:00 PM Possible Distribution Meeting 12:00 PM	5 Possible Distribution Meeting 12:00 PM	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15 Possible Distribution Meeting 12:00 PM	16 Possible Presentation Meeting 5:00 PM	17 Possible Presentation Meeting 5:00 PM Possible Distribution Meeting 12:00 PM	18	19 Possible Distribution Meeting 12:00 PM	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	1	2	3