



FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, JANUARY 26, 2026
FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
800 CUSHMAN STREET, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

The City Council convened at 6:30 p.m. on the above date, following a 5:30 p.m. Work Session on Permanent Fund Review Board Annual Report, to conduct a Regular Meeting of the Fairbanks City Council via Zoom webinar and in the City Council Chambers at 800 Cushman Street, Fairbanks, Alaska, with Mayor Mindy O’Neill 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
 Andrew Coccaro, Fire Chief
 Richard Sweet, Deputy Police Chief
 Jeremiah Cotter, Public Works Director
 Robert Pristash, City Engineer
 Jake Merritt, Human Resources Director (remotely)
 Brenda McFarlane, Crisis Now Coordinator

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

At the request of Mayor O’Neill, **Ms. Therrien** read the land acknowledgement.

INVOCATION

The invocation was given by City Clerk Danyielle Snider.

FLAG SALUTATION

At the request of Mayor O’Neill, City Attorney Thomas Chard led the flag salutation.

CITIZENS’ COMMENTS

Keith Thompson – K. Thompson spoke against the proposed increases in compensation for the Mayor and City Council [Ordinance Nos. 6338 and 6339] and the practice of voting to approve one’s own raise. He acknowledged the work of elected officials and advocated for an incremental approach rather than a large jump in compensation.

June Rogers – J. Rogers expressed opposition to Ordinance No. 6338 and read a letter outlining her views on the public service that elected officials perform for the community. She suggested that a discussion on compensation for the Mayor deserves careful consideration but should be separate from the issue of Councilmember pay, focusing on the specifics of the position at the City of Fairbanks rather than comparing it to the salary of mayors for other Alaskan municipalities.

Stephanie Thibedeau – S. Thibedeau spoke against increases in compensation for elected officials and discussed the many people in the community struggling with the cost of basic needs and low wages. She asserted that the proposed increase to the Mayor’s salary was not simply a cost-of-living adjustment but rather the equivalent of an entire additional worker’s annual wages. She suggested that leadership should include a shared sense of sacrifice and urged the Council to reject the associated ordinances and focus on efforts to uplift community members.

Brian Beal – B. Beal shared that he had been concerned about past increases to the salaries of State legislators and the Governor but suggested that such increases could be warranted after the needs of all other staff and administrative members were met first.

Charity Gadapee, Director of Visitor and Community Engagement for Explore Fairbanks – C. Gadapee gave a report on the following items:

- visitation to the Morris Thompson Cultural & Visitors Center for the last quarter of 2025;
- the Golden Heart Giving campaign which supported four local food security programs;
- a career exploration event for high school students; and
- the Interior Tourism Conference.

David van den Berg, Executive Director of Downtown Association of Fairbanks (DTA) – D. van den Berg shared details about an upcoming ordinance being considered by the Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) Assembly regarding incentives for housing development. He discussed key differences in zoning between the Borough’s proposed ordinance and the one recently passed. He encouraged collaboration between the bodies to provide a greater opportunity for success.

Mr. Cleworth asked D. van den Berg if he would be testifying before the Assembly on the issue. D. van den Berg confirmed that he was planning to.

Mayor O’Neill asked D. van den Berg for clarification on certain aspects of the ordinance. D. van den Berg provided additional details regarding the zoning language and stated that his organization hopes that the downtown area would benefit from the program as much as possible.

Dustin Wiggins – D. Wiggins spoke of the proposed increase in compensation for the City Council and Mayor from the perspective of a business owner having endured good and bad years. He expressed appreciation for the work of elected officials and acknowledged the need to regularly review salaries and make modest adjustments but suggested that the proposed raise for the Mayor was excessive. He expressed concern over the high percentage increases and setting a precedent.

Melissa Charlie, Executive Director of Fairbanks Native Association (FNA) – M. Charlie spoke on Ordinance No. 6334 and stated that FNA supports the effort to have meaningful dialogue with the City Council to build trust and greater success. She gave a brief history of FNA and the services it provides to the entire community. She affirmed that FNA would continue to meet with the Mayor and other staff on a regular basis regardless of the outcome of the ordinance.

Mayor O’Neill, hearing no more requests for comment, declared Citizens’ Comments closed.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA

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

Mr. Cleworth pulled the following from the consent agenda:

- Item 13(c), Ordinance No. 6338
- Item 13(d), Ordinance No. 6339
- Memorandum Regarding Use of Council Travel Funds

Mayor O’Neill called for objection to the APPROVAL of the agenda and the consent agenda, as amended, and hearing none, so ORDERED.

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

SPECIAL ORDERS

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

Lic.	DBA	License Type	Licensee	Address
4156	Circle K	Package Store	Holiday Alaska, LLC	2300 S. Cushman Street

Mayor O’Neill called for testimony.

Mary Muradyants (via Zoom) – M. Muradyants shared that she was available to answer questions as a representative of Circle K.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if there would be any change of plans with the renewal of the license and whether the existing license allowed for the sale of hard liquor. M. Muradyants indicated that no change in business was anticipated and that their license did allow for hard liquor sales.

Mr. Marney noted that the licensee’s location had been demolished and a new building was being constructed. He recounted that in the past, the store accounted for more law enforcement response calls than any other license holder within the City. He asked if there were any plans to address the high call volume when the new facility opened. M. Muradyants stated that she had no report on the issue but that the concern was noted. **Mr. Marney** asked if they had upgraded their security. M. Muradyants indicated that she also did not have any information on this but could report back.

Amy Miller – A. Miller stated that she had worked at multiple stores with Holiday Alaska (former name) over the last few years and had never been in a situation where she felt unsafe. **Mr. Marney** asked if she was aware of the lengthy call reports. A. Miller indicated that she believed him.

Mr. Ringstad asked if the majority of calls were for situations outside of the store rather than for incidents taking place within. A. Miller reported that she only recalls one instance when they had

to call law enforcement for an in-store issue. **Mr. Ringstad** questioned whether the Council could require Circle K to provide its own security as a way to reduce the law enforcement burden.

Keith Thompson – K. Thompson pointed out that the local Walmart store contracts security services to help with its own significant challenges.

There being no more comments, **Mayor O’Neill** closed the public hearing.

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

Mayor O’Neill asked Deputy Police Chief Richard Sweet to provide a report on the location.

DC Sweet explained that the majority of calls to the location may not pertain to issues involving the business itself but may only be tied to the address as a reference due to the coding process that dispatchers use when someone calls 911. He stated that each call on a report would need to be reviewed individually to determine whether or not the incident was directly associated with the business. He recounted that in the uncommon occurrences when officers needed to respond to something inside it was typically due to food theft in the convenience store.

Ms. Sprinkle discussed the overall traffic in the area of the store. DC Sweet noted that it was a busy intersection in town and that, to his understanding, the store was one of the highest grossing locations per capita in the company. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked if he had any concerns with the renewal application. DC Sweet reiterated that few calls for the area related to the business itself.

Mr. Marney asked if there had been a drop in calls while the new store was being constructed. DC Sweet indicated that there had been a modest reduction, likely attributed to the reduced traffic. **Mr. Marney** stated that he hopes the company will invest in better security and make an overall effort to reduce the amount of local law enforcement burden to the area.

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

YEAS: Cleworth, Ringstad, Therrien, Tidwell
NAYS: Marney, Sprinkle
Mayor O’Neill declared the MOTION CARRIED.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

- a) Regular Meeting Minutes of December 15, 2025

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- b) Regular Meeting Minutes of January 12, 2026

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

MAYOR'S COMMENTS AND REPORT

Mayor O'Neall highlighted select items from the written report she had provided to the Council and department heads, including:

- a newly promoted Captain at the Fairbanks Fire Department;
- fire response statistics during the recent extreme cold snap;
- the expansion of the Storefront Improvement Program; and
- her intent to develop a community outreach program to shape the development of the request for proposal (RFP) for the Starter Block at Lacey Street.

Mayor O'Neall noted that the quilts that were previously hanging on the walls of Council Chambers had been relocated to a new location on the upper level of City Hall. She shared that going forward, Chambers would display local art coordinated with "First Friday" events.

Ms. Tidwell asked for additional information on the soon-to-be vacant City-owned log cabin on First Avenue and whether the opportunity to lease the property would go out for bid. Chief of Staff Sanders stated that he did not believe an RFP was needed and that the Council could approve a new tenant. **Ms. Sprinkle** expressed disagreement. **Mayor O'Neall** shared that discussions were taking place on the best approach to activate the space. **Ms. Tidwell** asked if it was currently advertised or just being spread via word of mouth. City Attorney Chard clarified that the appropriate process would be for the Council to provide direction as to whether to create an RFP, pursue a lease, or sell the property and that staff would implement the Council's plan. He added that the process would require an ordinance to allow for public comment. **Ms. Tidwell** suggested that the topic be included as a discussion item at the next work session. **Ms. Therrien** concurred.

COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. Cleworth thanked Chief Financial Officer Bell for the work of the Permanent Fund Review Board and its annual report. He discussed the history of the Fund and the financial benefits the City had enjoyed since its inception. He spoke of the Circle K alcohol license renewal and indicated that he sympathizes with those who voted against it. He acknowledged the problems in the area and the challenge in identifying what issues could be attributed to the area versus the licensee. He suggested that clearer data be available for consideration of future license renewals, when prudent. He asked if there was an investigation underway to determine the cause of the recent fire at the Army National Guard armory. Fire Chief Andrew Coccaro stated that the Fire Marshal was investigating the incident, that they did not suspect foul play, and would have a report soon.

Ms. Therrien recounted past conversations about licensees such as Fred Meyer where most entries on the police call log are unrelated to the alcohol license. She stated that now that the Council had received the annual report for the Permanent Fund, the committee would like direction as to whether they should increase their risk for fund investments. **Mayor O'Neall** indicated that they could discuss the topic at a work session once it had been appropriately noticed to the public.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a) Ordinance No. 6334 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Section 2-119(a), Order of Business, Adding a Set Time During the Second Council Meeting of Each Month for Receiving a Report from Leadership in Our Community, Including Denakkanaaga,

Fairbanks Native Association, Tanana Chiefs Conference, Doyon, or Other Designated Groups. Sponsored by Councilmembers Sprinkle, Cleworth, and Therrien. Postponed from the Regular Meeting of January 12; a public hearing was held at that time.

Note: Ordinance No. 6334 was introduced at the Regular Meeting of December 15, 2025 and ADVANCED to the Regular Meeting of January 12, 2026, at which time a motion to ADOPT was made and a public hearing held. The ordinance was then POSTPONED. The motion to ADOPT remained on the floor.

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Mr. Cleworth**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6334 by changing Sec. 2-119(a)(10) to read: "Report from Fairbanks Native organizations every other month."

Ms. Sprinkle explained that this would give breathing room and time for thoughtful preparation.

Mayor O'Neill called for objection on the motion to AMEND Ordinance No. 6334 by changing Sec. 2-119(a)(10) to read: "Report from Fairbanks Native organizations every other month" and hearing none, declared the MOTION CARRIED.

Clerk Snider confirmed the title of the ordinance would also be updated to reflect the amendment.

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6334, as Amended, by adding the word "Alaska" between "Fairbanks" and "Native" in Sec. 2-119(a)(10).

Mayor O'Neill called for objection on the motion to AMEND Ordinance No. 6334, as Amended, by adding the word "Alaska" between "Fairbanks" and "Native" in Sec. 2-119(a)(10) and, hearing none, declared the MOTION CARRIED.

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6334, as Amended by striking "or other designated groups" from the title.

Mr. Cleworth explained that the ordinance is very specific yet the final phrase creates a vagueness and obligation to entertain other, potentially unknown entities, which may be outside of the intent. He shared that the City Attorney had also expressed concern about the language, which prompted the amendment. Attorney Chard confirmed that the title and "whereas" statements are used to convey the intent of the Council. He noted that "Fairbanks Alaska Native organizations" is broad and that the amendment clarifies the Council's intent is to hear from only the entities in the title.

Mayor O'Neill called for objection on the motion to AMEND Ordinance No. 6334, as Amended, by striking "or other designated groups" from the title and, hearing none, declared the MOTION CARRIED.

There was no additional discussion on the main motion.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6334, AS AMENDED, AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Ringstad, Tidwell, Therrien, Sprinkle, Marney, Cleworth
NAYS: None
Mayor O'Neall declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6334, as Amended, ADOPTED.

- b) Ordinance No. 6335 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Section 2-653, City Council Approval of Excess Expenditures. Sponsored by Councilmember Cleworth. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

Mayor O'Neall called for testimony and hearing none, declared Public Testimony closed.

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Mr. Cleworth**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6335.

Ms. Tidwell asked for clarification on the changes in the ordinance. **Mr. Cleworth** explained that some of the updates were to clean up language based on guidance from the City Attorney but that others were to ensure that when a monetary change to the budget occurs, it will go through the appropriate process and include two hearings. He noted that once in a while a resolution slips through, sometimes without a fiscal note, and that such should require an ordinance. He clarified that the change would not inhibit certain processes such as those involving grant opportunities.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6335 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Sprinkle, Cleworth, Ringstad, Marney, Tidwell, Therrien
NAYS: None
Mayor O'Neall declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6335 ADOPTED.

- c) Ordinance No. 6336 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Section 74-117, Room Rental Tax Purpose and Limitation, by Removing Term Limits for Discretionary Fund Committee Members. Sponsored by Councilmember Marney. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

Mayor O'Neall called for testimony and hearing none, declared Public Testimony closed.

Mr. Marney, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6336. There was no discussion.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6336 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Marney, Cleworth, Therrien, Sprinkle, Ringstad, Tidwell
NAYS: None
Mayor O'Neall declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6336 ADOPTED.

- d) Ordinance No. 6337 – An Ordinance Authorizing Public Works to Provide Services Outside the City Benefitting Tanana Valley State Fair Association in Exchange for a Snow

Storage Site. Sponsored by Mayor O'Neall. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

Mayor O'Neall called for testimony and hearing none, declared Public Testimony closed.

Ms. Tidwell, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6337.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if the snow being placed in the storage area could be recycled for World ICE Art Championships activities. Chief of Staff Sanders explained that the plowed snow may include rocks, garbage, and other debris and any use of the snow would be discouraged for safety purposes.

Mr. Cleworth stated that the ordinance is an example of the kind of working relationships that can and do exist between the City and other entities. He stated that snow dump sites are some of the most precious properties the City owns, given the complex and costly operation of snow removal. He noted that the storage site saves time and money and is a great benefit.

Mr. Ringstad pointed out that the first "whereas" statement mentions the Aurora and Johnson subdivisions and asked to confirm that there was nothing that would tie the City's hands from using the space to store snow from other areas, if needed. Attorney Chard confirmed that the actual agreement between the City and Association clarifies that no such restriction would be in place.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6337 AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor O'Neall declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6337 ADOPTED.

NEW BUSINESS

- a) Resolution No. 5198 – A Resolution Awarding a Contract to 911 Rapid Response to Provide a Brush Truck in the Amount of \$326,000. Sponsored by Mayor O'Neall.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- b) Resolution No. 5199 – A Resolution Urging the Legislature to Approve a Supplemental Appropriation to Meet the State Match Commitment for Federal Transportation Funding for FFY2026. Sponsored by Councilmembers Sprinkle and Tidwell and Mayor O'Neall.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- c) Ordinance No. 6338 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Sec. 2-86 Setting Council Member Compensation. Sponsored by Mayor O'Neall.

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to ADVANCE Ordinance No. 6338.

Mr. Ringstad stated the Council passed the 2026 budget recently and that this should have been discussed then. **Mayor O’Neill** clarified that the changes would not be effective until 2027.

Mr. Cleworth expressed opposition to an increase in Council compensation and ethical concern with the proposal. He thanked former Councilmembers Shoshanna Kun and June Rogers for publicly voicing similar stances. He stated that the \$500 Councilmembers receive each month adequately covers the work they do and that a 100% increase was too much. He stated that he cringes each time he hears about federal legislators voting to give themselves a raise and that at the very least, he would prefer to see such changes only apply for the Council’s successors. **Mr. Cleworth** noted that several current Councilmembers had served together for several years and the issue had not been raised until now, in tandem with a separate proposal to increase the Mayor’s salary, which raised questions for him. He stated that service on the Council was an honor—not a job—and that he would run again even for only a \$1 stipend. He acknowledged that there are demands on Councilmembers’ time but that the non-monetary rewards for being part of the decision-making process were far greater. He spoke against advancement and recounted that many years prior the Council also received full medical insurance and that he personally heard individuals occasionally discuss running for office primarily for the benefits. He suggested that they should want people to serve because they want to help the community and reiterated that if the ordinance passes, he hopes it would only apply for those who succeed current members.

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6338 by reducing the proposed salary for Councilmembers from \$1,000 to \$750.

Ms. Therrien explained that she proposed an increase some years ago, and she believes it is an important way to encourage younger people to run for office. She discussed the difference in public service for those who are self-employed or retired and stated that the stipend is important. She suggested that \$1,000 seemed extreme and less might be easier for residents to accept.

Ms. Sprinkle agreed that she would serve for free but that the stipend is helpful, especially as a self-employed individual. She shared that she willingly spends at least 10 hours a week on Council-related work and that while she wants Councilmembers to be invested in their positions, she hopes to see the City invest in them in return.

Ms. Tidwell acknowledged that it was uncomfortable for members to discuss raising their own compensation but pointed out that approving a change that would only apply to their successors would be challenging given the different end dates of their respective terms. She noted that the stipend had been unchanged since 2007 and that while members’ time is valuable, no one would run for office for the money. She asserted that an increase was appropriate after nearly 20 years.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6338 BY REDUCING THE PROPOSED SALARY FOR COUNCILMEMBERS FROM \$1,000 TO \$750 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Sprinkle, Tidwell, Ringstad, Therrien
NAYS: Cleworth, Marney
Mayor O’Neill declared the MOTION CARRIED.

There was no additional discussion on the main motion.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADVANCE ORDINANCE NO. 6338, AS AMENDED, AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Therrien, Tidwell, Ringstad, Sprinkle

NAYS: Marney, Cleworth

Mayor O'Neall declared the MOTION CARRIED.

- d) Ordinance No. 6339 – An Ordinance Regarding the Mayor's Compensation. Sponsored by Councilmember Tidwell.

Ms. Tidwell, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to ADVANCE Ordinance No. 6339.

Ms. Tidwell stated that the Mayor's salary is significantly below an appropriate level and that the discussion is important for the Council. She noted she is open to a different amount but views the Mayor's compensation as separate from Councilmember pay, given the expectation that the Mayor works full-time, which has not always been the case with past mayors. She added that if the role is treated as a full-time job, the salary should reflect that.

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6339 by reducing the proposed salary from \$136,000 to \$112,800.

Ms. Therrien explained that the amendment would equate to an increase of \$25,000 rather than \$48,200. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked if the new amount was based on a certain percentage or was just arbitrarily chosen. **Ms. Therrien** indicated that she had heard the negative community response and had chosen a lower amount as a compromise but would be open to an adjustment.

Mr. Cleworth agreed that the ordinance was not being received well by community members, including former Councilmembers. He reviewed the current compensation and benefits package of the position and noted that it is unlike any other employee at the City, with no requirement other than being elected by the voters. He pointed out that the Council has no say whether a mayor shows up to work one hour a week or 80. He recounted that the mayor's salary is public information and had never stopped people from running for office. He added that it should not be compared to other administrative positions which may require professional experience, degrees, or other training. He noted that the two candidates who ran in last year's race knew what the job paid and that neither suggested during their campaigns that the compensation would be insufficient, which made the proposal for an increase, only months after the election, concerning. **Mr. Cleworth** discussed his own term as mayor and acknowledged the financial sacrifice, which he found to be well worth the experience. He suggested that the Council pursue other changes to the mayoral compensation package, such as annual increases based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), similar to other positions at the City. He reviewed a significant problem with the pension package, which requires five years to become vested, so only mayors who serve two terms will realize the benefit. He pointed out that regardless of whether a mayor chooses to run for a second term or runs but is not elected, they will never see a dime of the pension they and the City contributed to. He shared that four recent mayors, including himself, experienced this and that language within the contract provided a window of opportunity to remedy the problem. He suggested the Council adopt a resolution to this nature and seek mutual agreement between the parties.

Ms. Sprinkle acknowledged Mr. Cleworth's concerns. She expressed her desire to step back and do more homework on the issue so that a comprehensive review could be completed with prudent adjustments implemented rather than a lump sum raise.

Mr. Marney concurred that he had received much feedback on the proposal with no one in support of the increase. He stated that such a proposal should have been discussed with the annual budget.

Ms. Sprinkle asked what should be done with Ordinance No. 6339 if the Council wanted to pursue other options such as a change to the pension. **Mayor O'Neall** indicated that there were several options, such as voting the ordinance down, requesting the Finance Committee review the subject of mayoral compensation, or drafting a different ordinance.

Ms. Therrien asserted that the fact that nothing is refunded for unvested mayors was reason enough to warrant an increase to the position's salary. She suggested that the negative community response was likely due to the amount of the increase and that the Council should advance the ordinance with a reduced increase as proposed by the amendment.

Ms. Sprinkle spoke to Mr. Cleworth's comment that the salary had not prevented anyone from running in the past and suggested that there is no way of confirming the validity of that claim.

Mr. Cleworth asked what the overall compensation package price would be with the proposed amendment. Chief Financial Officer Bell reported that the package would equate to \$150,270.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6339 BY REDUCING THE PROPOSED SALARY FROM \$136,000 TO \$112,800 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Sprinkle, Tidwell, Therrien

NAYS: Ringstad, Cleworth, Marney

Clerk Note: Due to a conflict of interest, the Mayor did not vote on the matter.

Mayor O'Neall declared the motion FAILED.

Ms. Tidwell acknowledged that she did not see the ordinance advancing and expressed hope that the Council could work together to find other ways to bring the mayor's compensation package to a more appropriate level. She expressed her belief that the issue prevents individuals from running for office and that even if the compensation was increased based on the CPI, more would need to be done since the salary was stagnant for so many years.

Mr. Cleworth asserted that the current \$87,800 salary is a decent wage in the private sector, especially when paired with medical benefits: an overall package rate of \$124,920. He expressed agreement with community members who believe that the position is already well-compensated.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADVANCE ORDINANCE NO. 6339 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Therrien

NAYS: Ringstad, Cleworth, Marney, Sprinkle, Tidwell

Mayor O'Neall declared the MOTION FAILED.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TO THE CITY COUNCIL

a) Memorandum Regarding Use of Council Travel Funds

Mr. Cleworth shared his perspective of both the positive and negative aspects of the Alaska Municipal League (AML). He suggested that if the Council expanded the use of budgeted funds for a member to attend an AML conference, it should come with the caveat requiring that the Councilmember only discuss matters on which the Council had taken an official stance.

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to ACCEPT the Memorandum Regarding Use of Council Travel Funds.

Ms. Therrien shared her reasoning for wishing to attend the AML Winter Legislative Conference in February. She confirmed that she would not speak on the Council's behalf for anything that was not authorized but noted there were other items she wanted the Council to consider before then.

Mr. Marney pointed out that Mr. Ringstad was also a member of the City's Legislative Committee and that he and Ms. Therrien traveled to Juneau in 2025 for similar purposes. He asked if Mr. Ringstad would also be allowed to travel. **Mayor O'Neall** reviewed the adopted budget parameters for Council travel and clarified that the memorandum would authorize the use of the funds for one Councilmember to attend the conference, which had not been included in the original narrative. She noted that, if accepted, a budget amendment would come later. She suggested that this would be the opportunity to consider funding for a second Councilmember to make a similar trip.

Ms. Tidwell noted that there was no one to send to AML's "Newly Elected Official" training after the last election and asked if that meant there were funds available in the travel account. Attorney Chard clarified that any savings would have been in the previous budget year. **Mayor O'Neall** asked for a summary of the 2025 travel account's ending balance. CFO Bell reported that she believes the line item may have been slightly over budget but if not, it would have only had a small balance remaining. **Ms. Tidwell** suggested that the Council may not be budgeting enough for two trips for two members. She spoke in favor of the memorandum and sending Ms. Therrien to advocate for the City. She stated that funding for Mr. Ringstad should also be provided, whether to go on the same trip or separately, at another time. **Ms. Sprinkle** concurred.

Mr. Ringstad stated that he and Ms. Therrien had discussed traveling to Juneau but at a later date. He indicated that he was open to going at separate times if the Council preferred. He explained that going later in the year allows a greater focus on Fairbanks' specific needs while the AML conference focuses on AML-specific topics.

Mr. Cleworth expressed support for Ms. Therrien attending the conference but only if done within the established budget. He spoke against increasing the Council travel budget.

Attorney Chard clarified that if the memorandum was approved, it would update the budget narrative and require the Council to either accept an increase to its travel budget or agree that the proposed trip would replace another previously anticipated trip for one Councilmember. He recounted that the Council had approved Ms. Therrien and Ms. Sprinkle attending the AML Conference in December 2025 when it was determined that there would be no newly elected officials. Clerk Snider confirmed that the Council had increased its travel budget in 2025 by \$250

but did not dip into the increased amount. She pointed out that since Mr. Marney was ineligible to run for another term, there would be at least one new Councilmembers after the 2026 election.

Mayor O’Neill asked if approving the memo would automatically adjust the Council travel budget. Attorney Chard confirmed that it would not but that such would likely be incorporated into the upcoming budget amendment ordinance for the Council to consider.

Mr. Cleworth acknowledged the options outlined by Attorney Chard. He asked if Ms. Therrien was amenable to having the trip take the place of the other trip planned for later in the year. **Ms. Therrien** stated that if she had to choose, it would be more important for her and Mr. Ringstad to travel to Juneau at a later time. She indicated that she would still attend and report to the Council on the AML Legislative Committee meetings. She acknowledged that the dates of the February AML conference would make it impossible to have an approved budget amendment before travel.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ACCEPT THE MEMORANDUM REGARDING USE OF COUNCIL TRAVEL FUNDS AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Therrien, Tidwell
NAYS: Marney, Sprinkle, Cleworth, Ringstad
Mayor O’Neill declared the MOTION FAILED.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if this meant that Ms. Therrien would not be able to attend the conference. **Mayor O’Neill** clarified that she would not be able to use the Council travel budget for the trip.

b) Fourth Quarter Sole Source Purchasing Report

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND COUNCILMEMBERS’ COMMENTS

Mr. Cleworth spoke against the Governor’s recent state sales tax proposal and recounted the stance the Council had taken in the past against the issue. He stated that he intended to introduce a resolution at the next meeting to convey the Council’s opposition to the proposed tax plan.

Ms. Sprinkle congratulated the Mayor on being selected for a Fellowship hosted by the Harvard Graduate School of Design, in cooperation with the Mayors’ Institute of City Design. She reported that she would be attending her first meeting of the Economic Development Commission and that Senator Dan Sullivan would be presenting at the next meeting of the Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Ringstad expressed his belief that sales taxes are typically meant to be a local government matter and that it would behoove the Council to discuss the issue and take an official stance on the matter, or agree to take no stance, before he and Ms. Therrien made a trip to Juneau.

Mr. Marney expressed appreciation for the Mayor’s written report. He shared that he and Mr. Ringstad attended a luncheon and were asked about the status of the RFP for the Starter Block at Lacey Street and that they had to admit they had nothing to offer. He referenced a schedule that was previously provided which showed an RFP close date of March 13, 2026. He admitted that he did not know if the schedule was still in effect but stated that if it was, time was short.

Ms. Tidwell reported on the recent Fairbanks Area Surface Transportation (FAST) Planning meeting which included new presentations involving websites with highly interactive dashboards. She shared that the Finance Committee would meet later in the week and congratulated the Mayor on being selected as one of eight mayors nationwide for the Harvard Fellowship. **Mr. Cleworth** asked Ms. Tidwell to share with the Council any updates to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) she learns of through FAST Planning. **Ms. Tidwell** indicated that she would.

Ms. Therrien reported on the recent Legislative Committee meeting and reviewed the various issues and legislation that had been discussed. She shared potential dates suggested by the City's lobbyist for the best time for her and Mr. Ringstad to travel to the Juneau. She also congratulated the Mayor on being selected for the Fellowship. **Mr. Cleworth** asked Ms. Therrien if she could get an update on the State's legacy debt and share it with him. **Ms. Therrien** agreed to do so.

Mayor O'Neall congratulated the firefighters of the Fairbanks area for winning the annual "Guns & Hoses" hockey match against local law enforcement. She reported that she participated in a Fairbanks Music Summit panel which focused on music's role in local economic development. She shared that the application period for the 2026 Citizens' Engagement Academy was open.

CITY CLERK'S REPORT

Clerk Snider provided additional details for the upcoming Citizens' Engagement Academy.

CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Attorney Chard shared information about his and the Deputy City Attorney's involvement with the annual Martin Luther King Day Free Legal Help event. He discussed how the event was a great example of people in Fairbanks stepping up to help others in the community.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mayor O'Neall called for objection and, hearing none, so ORDERED.

Mayor O'Neall declared the meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.


MINDY O'NEALL, MAYOR

ATTEST:


D. DANYIELLE SNIDER, MMC, CITY CLERK

Transcribed by: CC