



FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, FEBRUARY 9, 2026  
FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
800 CUSHMAN STREET, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

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The City Council convened at 6:30 p.m. 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  
   Sue Sprinkle, Seat C  
   Crystal Tidwell, Seat D (remotely)  
   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  
   Ron Dupee, Police Chief (remotely)  
   Andrew Coccaro, Fire Chief  
   Kristi Merideth, FECC Manager (remotely)  
   Robert Pristash, City Engineer  
   Jake Merritt, Human Resources Director

**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, **Mr. Marney** led the flag salutation.

**CITIZENS’ COMMENTS**

*Bill Wright, Director of Tourism and Meeting Sales at Explore Fairbanks* – B. Wright discussed his team’s work marketing Fairbanks as a destination by hosting familiarization tours, attending travel industry conferences, and translating their materials into other languages. He reported on 2025 visitor data for both hotel/motel occupancy rates and traveler counts from the airport.

**Ms. Sprinkle** recounted a past report which had mentioned an increase in marketing efforts to India and asked if that was still occurring. B. Wright indicated that such efforts were still in effect

and had seen great success. He shared that he would be returning to India for additional marketing work later in the year.

**Ms. Therrien** thanked Explore Fairbanks for its involvement with the Yukon Quest event downtown the previous weekend.

Brian Beal – B. Beal expressed appreciation for the work of elected officials and members of the administration. He discussed a concern with coordination of pedestrian and vehicle traffic signals at the intersection of Airport Way and Peger Road. He spoke fondly of the late Frank Turney.

James Cloud– J. Cloud stated that he works for The Spur and was in attendance, along with other coworkers, to speak in support of the business as the company’s alcohol license renewal application was being considered later on the agenda. **Mr. Marney** thanked him for being present.

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

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA**

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

**Mr. Cleworth** pulled item 14(b), Resolution No. 5201, from the consent agenda.

**Mr. Ringstad** pulled item 14(d), Ordinance No. 6340, from the consent agenda.

**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.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

a) Regular Meeting Minutes of January 26, 2026

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

**SPECIAL ORDERS**

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

Lic.	DBA	License Type	Licensee	Address
4232	The Spur	Beverage Dispensary	JNJ, Inc.	537 Gaffney Road
3969	Tony’s Sports Bar	Beverage Dispensary	JNJ, Inc.	537 Gaffney Road, Suite 1
703	Gavora’s Fine Wine	Package Store	Market Basket, Inc.	250 3rd Street
1134	Thrifty Liquors	Package Store	Market Basket, Inc.	1410 Cushman Street

**Mayor O’Neill** called for testimony.

Brandon Bender – B. Bender shared that he is an employee of The Spur and spoke in favor of the owners, citing their positive treatment of staff members and efforts to help the community.

**Ms. Sprinkle** noted that the location had seen fewer negative incidents over the last year or two and asked if anything had changed in terms of management or security measures. B. Bender reported that they make an effort to ensure patrons have rides and get home safely, especially during periods of extreme cold weather.

**Mr. Marney** asked how many employees the Spur has. B. Bender estimated about 20.

**Mr. Ringstad** asked if he works at both of the licensee’s locations. B. Bender confirmed he does.

Nicholas Nyquist – N. Nyquist shared that he owns the building rented by licensee JNJ, Inc. and spoke favorably of the owners, noting their efforts to pay for maintenance, updates, repairs, security, etc. He asserted that they are very fine tenants.

**Mr. Cleworth** asked if N. Nyquist had purchased the building from his father and how the subject property would be impacted by the upcoming Alaska Department of Transportation (DOT) project at the nearby intersection. N. Nyquist explained that the building is owned by a trust which he manages. He shared that DOT has informed him that they may lose 14 parking spots due to the project, which may be relocated elsewhere. He discussed his back-and-forth dialogue with DOT.

**Mr. Marney** thanked N. Nyquist for being present and available to speak on the application.

Ben Koch – B. Koch stated that he was representing the licensee Market Basket, Inc. and shared details about the upcoming demolition of Thrifty Liquor and plans to construct a more modern convenience store in its place, similar to Hot Springs Gas. He noted that while alcohol would still be sold, it would no longer be the primary component of the business model at that location.

**Ms. Sprinkle** asked if access to the property would be expanded to include an entrance from Airport Way. B. Koch reported that only continued access via Cushman Street was expected.

**Mr. Ringstad** pointed out that the building behind Thrifty Liquor was recently torn down and asked if they owned that property. B. Koch explained that they do and plan to utilize it for the new store’s design, noting their own loss of land from the aforementioned DOT project.

**Ms. Sprinkle** asked if their business plan includes security, given the known problems plaguing the area. B. Koch shared that they plan to implement new technology which requires an ID be scanned in order to enter the liquor store, which will check for fake IDs, perform age verification, and screen for known nuisance customers. He reported that the technology is utilized in Anchorage and elsewhere in the country but that they would be the first in Fairbanks to incorporate it. He clarified that the main convenience store would not involve the scanning device.

**Mr. Cleworth** asked if they owned the former Drop Inn Café. **Mayor O’Neill** indicated that the question was not relevant to the agenda item. **Mr. Cleworth** asserted that the licensee had mentioned planned usage of the property in the near future and that since the Council gets very

few opportunities to speak with business owners in this way the question was relevant to the license application. **Mayor O’Neill** ruled that a brief line of questioning would be allowed. B. Koch clarified that Market Basket, Inc. did own the property where the former Drop Inn Café was located but did not own the associated alcohol license. He discussed plans to utilize the vacant lot as part of the design for the new facility.

**Ms. Tidwell** asked when construction on the new building was planned. B. Koch indicated that they hope to begin in May and be open for business by the end of 2026.

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

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

**Ms. Sprinkle** expressed appreciation for those who had spoken, especially regarding security.

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

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

NAYS: None

**Mayor O’Neill** declared the MOTION CARRIED.

#### **REPORT FROM FAIRBANKS AK NATIVE ORGANIZATIONS (every other month)**

**Mayor O’Neill** noted that this was the first time the item had appeared on the agenda [*see Ordinance No. 6334, as Amended*] and asked the City Clerk to discuss implementation. Clerk Snider shared that she had discussed invitations to the appropriate entities with the Mayor’s Executive Assistant and proposed the first meeting in March as a prudent start date, to allow the groups time to prepare. She suggested that future coordination may best be accomplished through the Mayor’s Office but indicated that she would take direction from the Council. **Mayor O’Neill** asked if there was any opposition to having this agenda item handled as described and heard none.

#### **MAYOR’S COMMENTS AND REPORT**

**Mayor O’Neill** shared that she had attended a second roundtable with representatives from local governments and various Alaska Native organizations. She reported that many ideas were exchanged, including ways to support each other and collaborate in the future. **Ms. Therrien** asked if other Councilmembers could attend the meetings. **Mayor O’Neill** stated that once the group settles, others could be invited. **Mr. Marney** asked if Councilmembers could convey questions or other input for the roundtable. **Mayor O’Neill** stated that she was open to such communication. She discussed her experience from the first of eleven weeks of the Fellowship hosted by the Harvard Graduate School of Design, in cooperation with the Mayors’ Institute of City Design.

#### **COUNCILMEMBERS’ COMMENTS**

**Ms. Sprinkle** cited a newspaper article from the weekend, which reported that one in four workers in Alaska do not live in the state, which she found concerning.

**Mr. Marney** asked to be added as a sponsor to Resolution No. 5200.

**Ms. Therrien** spoke in favor of Resolution No. 5200 and suggested that all Councilmembers consider sponsoring it to show unanimous support. All remaining Councilmembers and the Mayor indicated consent to being added as sponsors.

### UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a) Ordinance No. 6338, as Amended – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Sec. 2-86 Setting Council Member Compensation. Sponsored by Mayor O’Neill.

**Mayor O’Neill** called for testimony and hearing none, declared Public Testimony closed.

**Ms. Sprinkle**, seconded by **Ms. Therrien**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6338, as Amended.

**Ms. Therrien** spoke in support of the amended ordinance, noting the reduction in the proposed increase. She stated that she had not heard any additional community input since the last meeting and expressed hope that the change would result in more people being interested in public service.

**Mr. Cleworth** stated that he had an ethical problem with voting to raise their own salaries by 50%, and he wished it would apply only to their successors. He asserted that if the ordinance was adopted, he would instruct payroll to not apply the increase to him. **Ms. Sprinkle** pointed out how long it would take if they waited for turnover in Council seats before applying the change.

**Mr. Ringstad** stated he did not have a problem with the increase. He recounted how long it had been since the amount had been adjusted and suggested it be reviewed more regularly in the future.

**Mr. Marney** shared that he gets upset when he sees members of Congress vote to raise their own pay but acknowledged that the ordinance’s overall impact was minimal. He acknowledged how much time Councilmembers dedicate and stated that he would vote in favor of the increase as he would be termed out before it went into effect.

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

YEAS: Marney, Ringstad, Sprinkle, Therrien, Tidwell

NAYS: Cleworth

**Mayor O’Neill** declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6338, as Amended, ADOPTED.

### NEW BUSINESS

- a) Resolution No. 5200 – A Resolution Urging the State Legislature to Reject Proposals for a Statewide Sales Tax. Sponsored by Councilmembers Cleworth and Therrien.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- b) Resolution No. 5201 – A Resolution Inviting Proposals from Qualified Developers Interested in Redeveloping City Property at 123 Lacey Street. Sponsored by Councilmember Cleworth.

**Mr. Cleworth**, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to APPROVE Resolution No. 5201.

**Ms. Therrien** asked to be added as a sponsor to the resolution.

**Mr. Cleworth** acknowledged that the resolution was just a start. He pointed out that two separate request for proposal (RFP) drafts had been provided for review and to refresh memories as to where the Council had left off. He stated that he would like to include an RFP with the resolution but wanted to know which direction the Council wished to take.

**Ms. Sprinkle** suggested that the Council use the next work session to discuss the matter further.

**Ms. Tidwell** asked for clarification on what passage of the resolution would mean. **Ms. Therrien** explained her concern with delaying the process any further. She stated that she was under the impression that an RFP would be published by March and that there had already been significant public input. She recounted that she had pushed the previous Mayor to move things forward and that she still had a strong desire to get an RFP out sooner rather than later.

**Mr. Ringstad** concurred and expressed his preference for an RFP to be open for a longer timeframe, rather than a public input period. He agreed that the Council is close and that after some further discussion at the next work session, they could likely be ready to proceed.

**Mr. Marney** stated that he agreed with Mr. Cleworth and Mr. Ringstad. He pointed out that there was no reference within either RFP draft for a local labor pool preference.

**Ms. Sprinkle**, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to POSTPONE Resolution No. 5201 to the Regular Meeting of February 23, 2026.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO POSTPONE RESOLUTION NO. 5201 TO THE REGULAR MEETING OF FEBRUARY 23, 2026 AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

**Mayor O'Neall** declared the MOTION CARRIED.

**Ms. Therrien** asked the City Attorney to prepare to advise on whether a preference for local labor could be included in the RFP. Attorney Chard confirmed that he would review the matter.

- c) Resolution No. 5202 – A Resolution Authorizing the City of Fairbanks to Apply for Funds from the United States Department of Transportation for the FY2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Program for Island Homes Subdivision Reconstruction. Introduced by Mayor O'Neall.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

d) Ordinance No. 6340 – An Ordinance Amending the 2026 Operating and Capital Budgets for the First Time. Sponsored by Mayor O’Neill.

**Ms. Therrien**, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to ADVANCE Ordinance No. 6340.

**Ms. Sprinkle**, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6340 by removing the \$100,000 increase to purchase Public Works software.

**Ms. Sprinkle** pointed out that the Council declined the request during the 2026 budgeting process.

**Ms. Therrien** recounted that she had been in favor of the requested software in the past and noted that with the recently completed audits there is over \$2MM more in the available fund balance. She asserted that it was a reasonable request and should be reconsidered.

**Mayor O’Neill** asked if Chief of Staff Michael Sanders had any input on the matter. M. Sanders explained that multiple departments were interested in using the software and that, if approved, it would be a valuable tool.

**Mr. Marney** stated that he was under the impression that there was only about \$780,000 remaining in the budget and asked where the \$2MM reference had come from. Chief Financial Officer Margarita Bell reviewed the dollar amounts and explained that if the ordinance was adopted with all proposed items incorporated, the remaining budget surplus would be \$680,428.

**Mr. Ringstad** asked to confirm that another \$3MM expense would be coming later in the year as part of the settlement of a past lawsuit. CFO Bell confirmed that \$3.25MM would be paid out from the Risk Fund, which would be replenished through an increase in property taxes.

**Mr. Cleworth** reviewed the proposed budget amendments and asserted that the remaining balance would be even lower than suggested. He expressed concern that the Council would be using about half of the 2026 surplus within the first two months of the year. He spoke to his frustration of ongoing expenses for software programs and discussed the hope for new revenue later in the year, which would allow more discretion on spending.

**Mr. Marney** asked if the Council should also consider any labor contract negotiations. M. Sanders clarified that the only contract being negotiated would not take effect until 2027.

**Ms. Tidwell** spoke in favor of the amendment.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6340 BY REMOVING THE \$100,000 INCREASE TO PURCHASE PUBLIC WORKS SOFTWARE AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Tidwell, Sprinkle, Ringstad, Marney, Cleworth

NAYS: Therrien

**Mayor O’Neill** declared the MOTION CARRIED.

**Mr. Cleworth** stated that at the next work session he would like to discuss the request for a \$25,000 increase to the Mayor’s budget to host a public safety conference.

**Mr. Ringstad** expressed frustration that only six weeks had passed since the Council adopted the 2026 budget and while it was understandable to have an amendment to balance the books after year-end financial processes had been completed, it was inappropriate to consider new items.

**Ms. Sprinkle** stated that she was also frustrated to see items which had already been debated and turned down for the 2026 budget now being requested again so early in the year.

**Mr. Marney** shared that he had spoken with the Fire Chief about some of the requests and that he understood some may more have merit than others.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADVANCE ORDINANCE NO. 6340, AS AMENDED, AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

**Mayor O’Neill** declared the MOTION CARRIED.

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

- a) Permanent Fund Review Board Meeting Minutes of October 29, 2025

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- b) Discretionary Fund Committee Meeting Minutes of November 12, 2025

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- b) Discretionary Fund Committee Meeting Minutes of December 2, 2025

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- b) Discretionary Fund Committee Meeting Minutes of December 3, 2025

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- b) Clay Street Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes of January 7, 2026

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS AND COUNCILMEMBERS’ COMMENTS**

**Mr. Marney** shared that he had recently met twice with Explore Fairbanks and reported on their increased focus on community programs.

**Ms. Sprinkle** reported on attending her first Economic Development Commission meeting as well as the recent meeting of the Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, which included a heavy emphasis on addressing local housing concerns.

**Ms. Therrien** gave a report on the Legislative Committee and discussed her and Mr. Ringstad's upcoming trip to Juneau.

**Mr. Ringstad** discussed fees for public records requests and shared that the City of Soldotna is also currently addressing the issue with the legislature.

**Mr. Cleworth** praised the work of the Clay Street Cemetery Commission and asked if the Clerk's Office would help draft a resolution to recognize the group's efforts. He discussed Resolution No. 5201 and suggested that either RFP would be feasible, noting considerable duplication between the two. He pointed out that both versions included concessions that the City would make, such as waiving building permit fees, which was neither common nor appropriate for an RFP. He expressed hope that the Council could come to a clear consensus and provide direction to staff soon. He discussed an item pertaining to proposed changes to the Alaska Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) that Ms. Therrien had mentioned during her report on legislative matters, including his disagreement with the Alaska Municipal League's position on the issue.

**Ms. Tidwell** stated that she would report on her recent meeting with the Fairbanks Area Surface Transportation (FAST) Planning Policy Board at the work session.

**Ms. Sprinkle** suggested that as Councilmembers discuss the RFP for Resolution No. 5201, they also keep in mind the recently cleared City properties downtown and at 730 Front Street.

**Mr. Cleworth** asked if any utility equipment for the Golden Heart Plaza is housed in the log cabin on First Avenue. M. Sanders confirmed that a lot of mechanical infrastructure for the plaza exists in the building's basement. **Mr. Cleworth** restated his preference that the City sell property instead of lease it but acknowledged that the City may be stuck with the log cabin.

### **CITY CLERK'S REPORT**

Clerk Snider stated that she would be absent for the next regular meeting and work session but that Deputy Clerk Colt Chase would be attending in her place. She shared that City Hall would be closed on Monday, February 16 in observance of Presidents' Day. She reported that the 2026 Citizen's Engagement Academy application period would close on Sunday, February 15 and that only a few spots remained.

### **CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT**

Attorney Chard stated that he had nothing to report.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**Mr. Cleworth**, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle** moved to ENTER into Executive Session to discuss IBEW/COF Labor Negotiations Guidance from Council and *Chapman v. City of Fairbanks*.

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

**Mayor O'Neill** called for a brief recess at 7:53 p.m., after which the City Council reconvened in Executive Session.

- a) IBEW/COF Labor Negotiations Guidance from Council [permissible under State law, including the provision at AS 44.62.310(c)(1)]

The Executive Session for IBEW/COF Labor Negotiations Guidance from Council was entered at 8:03 p.m. Those present included: Mayor O’Neill, Mr. Cleworth, Ms. Therrien, Ms. Tidwell (remotely), Mr. Marney, Mr. Ringstad, Ms. Sprinkle, Clerk Snider, Attorney Chard, Chief of Staff Sanders, CFO Bell, and HR Director Jake Merritt. The Executive Session ended at 8:42 p.m.

- b) Chapman v. City of Fairbanks [permissible under State law, including the provision at AS 44.62.310(c)(3)]

The Executive Session for *Chapman v. City of Fairbanks* was entered at 8:42 p.m. Those present included: Mayor O’Neill, Mr. Cleworth, Ms. Therrien, Ms. Tidwell (remotely), Mr. Marney, Mr. Ringstad, Ms. Sprinkle, Clerk Snider, Attorney Chard, and Chief of Staff Sanders. The Executive Session ended at 9:20 p.m.

**Mr. Cleworth** stated that the Council met in an Executive Session to discuss IBEW/COF Labor Negotiations Guidance from Council and *Chapman v. City of Fairbanks*. He affirmed that no action had been taken.

### ADJOURNMENT

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

**Mayor O’Neill** called for objection and, hearing none, so ORDERED.

**Mayor O’Neill** declared the meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

  
MINDY O’NEALL, MAYOR

ATTEST:

  
COLT CHASE, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK for  
D. DANYIELLE SNIDER, MMC, CITY CLERK

Transcribed by: CC