



FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, MARCH 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  
Lonny Marney, Seat E  
John Ringstad, Seat F

Absent: Crystal Tidwell, Seat D (excused)

Also Present: D. Danyielle Snider, City Clerk  
Michael Sanders, Chief of Staff  
Margarita Bell, Chief Financial Officer (remotely)  
Kaylee Stickel, Deputy City Attorney  
Ron Dupee, Police Chief (remotely)  
Richard Sweet, Deputy Police Chief  
Andrew Coccaro, Fire Chief  
Kristi Merideth, FECC Manager (remotely)  
Robert Pristash, City Engineer  
Jeremiah Cotter, Public Works Director  
Jake Merritt, Human Resources Director  
Teal Soden, Public Information Officer (remotely)  
Colt Chase, Deputy City Clerk  
Brenda McFarlane, Crisis Now Coordinator  
Jennifer Payan, Accounting Specialist (remotely)

**LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

At the request of Mayor O’Neill, **Mr. Cleworth** 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.

**CEREMONIAL MATTERS (Proclamations, Introductions, Recognitions, Awards)**

**Mayor O’Neill** read a proclamation designating March 2026 as “American Red Cross Month” and presented a framed copy to representatives from The American Red Cross of Alaska.

## CITIZENS' COMMENTS

Andy Warwick – A. Warwick shared that he had been following the Council's recent discussions about new revenue streams and recognized that most ideas had not panned out. He advocated for the implementation of a general sales tax, noting the number of borough residents and tourists who shop, eat, and otherwise engage in activities within the city. He suggested that data from business licensing fees could be used and that a tax could be in place by mid-summer. He stated that the City had a sales tax many years ago and that reinstating one would be a fair and logical solution.

**Mayor O'Neill** asked A. Warwick if he would be willing to sponsor a ballot initiative. A. Warwick stated he had not realized that a sales tax would require voter approval and asked if voters were involved when the former tax was repealed. **Mr. Cleworth** explained that many years ago the City Charter was updated to require that any general sales tax be ratified by voters in a regular election. He noted that between the Borough and City, an effort to enact a sales tax had been tried and failed ten times. **Ms. Sprinkle** pointed out that A. Warwick had referenced a past sales tax and asked how the tax had been repealed. **Mr. Cleworth** shared that when the State of Alaska was experiencing an abundance of revenue during the oil industry boom and was sharing millions of dollars with the City, the Council at the time voted to eliminate the sales tax.

**Ms. Therrien** asked A. Warwick if he felt that a seasonal sales tax would be prudent. A. Warwick stated that he had not given much thought to that option.

Mike Quinn – M. Quinn spoke in favor of seeing a request for proposals (RFP) published for the former Polaris Building property, noting the work that the Council had already put into the effort. He encouraged the Council to take action so the property could get back on the City's tax rolls.

Julia Hnilicka – J. Hnilicka shared that she had heard about hopes for downtown revitalization since she was a child and that an opportunity like the Polaris site did not come around often. She spoke in favor of taking more time to allow the citizens to provide input on what they would like to see happen and create a community-oriented RFP. She noted the frequent closures of downtown businesses. She suggested that developers are already aware that an opportunity would be coming but that the community had not been given a chance to be involved in the process.

David van den Berg, Executive Director of Downtown Association of Fairbanks (DTA) – D. van den Berg shared details about DTA's program to provide financial incentive for new downtown office and restaurant leases, noting their intent to bolster the City's Storefront Improvement Program and further promote downtown revitalization. He stated that DTA's Board of Directors was ready to evaluate proposals, and he read a portion of their recent press release.

**Ms. Sprinkle** asked D. van den Berg how they distinguish between the program's options for restaurants versus office space. D. van den Berg explained the difference between the incentives available for restaurants and business offices.

**Ms. Therrien** asked D. van den Berg what boundaries were being used for the program. D. van den Berg stated that the area was outlined in the Downtown Plan and aligned with Fairbanks General Code.

**Mr. Cleworth** asked D. van den Berg if the program was being funded by a grant or DTA. D. van den Berg reported that it came from DTA's general account, not tied to any grant or gaming revenue, and that their board felt they should reinvest a surplus from the previous year.

**Mr. Marney** asked D. van den Berg if he knew of any interest in the City-owned log cabin on First Avenue. D. van den Berg stated that the DTA shares news and projects with its membership, and they have software that tracks which messages are opened by recipients. He reported that the message the DTA forwarded about the request for information (RFI) seems to have garnered a lot of interest.

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

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

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

**Mr. Cleworth** pulled items 14(a), Resolution No. 5206, and 14(c), Ordinance No. 6343, from the consent agenda.

**Mayor O'Neall** called for objection to the motion to APPROVE the agenda and the consent agenda, as amended, and hearing none, declared the MOTION CARRIED.

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 applications for renewal:

<b>Lic.</b>	<b>DBA</b>	<b>License Type</b>	<b>Licensee</b>	<b>Address</b>
5266	Fushimi	Restaurant/Eating Place	Fushimi, LLC	607 Old Steese Highway, Ste 105
704	Costco Wholesale #1342	Package Store	Costco Wholesale Corporation	48 College Road

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

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

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

YEAS: Cleworth, Marney, Ringstad, Sprinkle, Therrien

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Tidwell

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

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

Type/License: Marijuana Retail Store, License #11927 and  
Type/License: Standard Marijuana Cultivation Facility, License #10958  
DBA: Green Life Supply, LLC  
Applicant: Green Life Supply, LLC (transfer of controlling interest only)  
Location: 511 30th Avenue, Unit B, Fairbanks

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

**Ms. Therrien**, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to WAIVE PROTEST on the marijuana license applications for transfer of controlling interest.

**Mr. Ringstad** noted that the previous concerns with odor containment ventilation equipment at the location. He asked for details about the change in ownership. Clerk Snider shared that the majority owner had passed away a couple years prior and that the business had been trying since then to get matters in place to complete the transfer of controlling interest. She confirmed that other renewal applications for the business had come before the Council during that time.

**Ms. Sprinkle** pointed out that the memo regarding the application indicated that the business was not in good standing with the State of Alaska and that there was no contact information provided for one of the two owners. She expressed frustration that the business did not have such details worked out. Clerk Snider explained that the information had been presented as it had been received from the State and that those items apparently had not been required by the State in order for them to deem the application complete. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked if they had ever learned whether the ventilation problems had been resolved. Clerk Snider indicated she had no news on that issue.

**Ms. Therrien** shared that she failed to file the same report before and stated it is not a big concern.

**Ms. Therrien**, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to AMEND the motion to WAIVE PROTEST on the marijuana license applications for transfer of controlling interest by adding a condition that the applicant file their biennial report with the State of Alaska by the end of March and send confirmation of such to the City Clerk.

**Mayor O'Neall** called for objection on the motion to AMEND the motion to waive protest and, hearing none, declared the motion CARRIED.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO WAIVE PROTEST ON THE MARIJUANA LICENSE APPLICATIONS FOR TRANSFER OF CONTROLLING INTEREST WITH THE CONDITION THAT THE APPLICANT FILE THEIR BIENNIAL REPORT WITH THE STATE OF ALASKA BY THE END OF MARCH AND SEND CONFIRMATION OF SUCH TO THE CITY CLERK AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Ringstad, Cleworth, Therrien  
NAYS: Marney, Sprinkle  
ABSENT: Tidwell  
**Mayor O'Neall** declared the MOTION CARRIED.

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

**Mayor O'Neall** reported that with the current annual convention of the Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC), many of the local organizations had full plates. She stated that they would soon have a schedule confirmed for future reports to the Council.

## MAYOR'S COMMENTS AND REPORT

**Mayor O'Neall** referenced her written report and stated her intent to provide a report monthly. She shared about her attendance at the TCC convention, noting the overwhelming kindness she had witnessed. She reported that City Engineer Robert Pristash had communicated his intent to retire on April 30 after 38 years of service. She spoke of his exemplary work and wide recognition.

**Ms. Therrien** asked if Councilmembers could start attending Alaska Native Roundtable meetings. **Mayor O'Neall** explained that currently the group is intended for just the local mayors and local organization leadership. She indicated that there may be opportunities to invite others soon.

**Ms. Sprinkle** stated she had still not heard when the Borough would begin sending a representative to Council meetings. **Mayor O'Neall** indicated that she would follow up on the item. **Ms. Sprinkle** expressed disappointment that no Assemblymembers had attended Council meetings after the City was informed that representatives would regularly attend; she noted that Councilmembers attend Assembly meetings. **Ms. Therrien** stated she would raise the issue at the next Assembly meeting.

**Mayor O'Neall** reported that an RFI for the Polaris site had been posted the previous Friday.

## COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

**Mr. Marney** asked when the bare walls of Chambers would be covered. **Mayor O'Neall** shared that she had been working with Fairbanks Arts Association to hold a First Friday art show each quarter, hopefully beginning in May. She pointed out that the quilts which previously adorned the walls were in a more protected location in the nearby stairway.

**Ms. Sprinkle** expressed appreciation for the snow removal work of the Public Works Department.

**Ms. Therrien** shared that she would be attending the next regular meeting remotely.

**Mr. Cleworth** expressed sadness that R. Pristash would be retiring and spoke of the excellent working relationship that existed over his career. Regarding the general sales tax idea proposed by A. Warwick earlier, he noted that the Municipality of Anchorage considered something similar a few months prior, only for the mayor to withdraw the proposed ordinance due to negative reception by the public. He suggested that a sales tax is regressive and would require more staff. He added that the idea had been rejected by voters multiple times in general elections over the years.

## UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a) Resolution No. 5201, as Amended – A Resolution Inviting Proposals from Qualified Developers Interested in Redeveloping City Property at 123 Lacey Street. Sponsored by Councilmembers Cleworth and Therrien.

*Note: Resolution No. 5201 was introduced on February 9, 2026, at which time a motion to approve was made and seconded. The resolution was then postponed to February 23 where it was amended and postponed again. The motion to approve remained on the floor.*

**Mayor O’Neill** stated she was aware of the intent to postpone until all members were present.

**Ms. Sprinkle**, seconded by **Ms. Therrien**, moved to POSTPONE Resolution No. 5201, as Amended, to the regular meeting of March 23, 2026.

**Ms. Sprinkle** pointed out that the Council postponed the resolution at the last meeting primarily out of courtesy to Mr. Marney, who was absent. She suggested that it would be fair to do the same for Ms. Tidwell, who was currently travelling.

**Mr. Cleworth** recounted that Ms. Tidwell was present at the last meeting, had expressed her thoughts, and made it clear that she would vote against the resolution, whereas Mr. Marney had not been present at all. He suggested that Ms. Tidwell’s absence was an automatic “no” vote, so he saw no reason to postpone.

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

YEAS: Therrien, Marney, Sprinkle

NAYS: Ringstad, Cleworth

ABSENT: Tidwell

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

**Ms. Therrien** called a POINT OF ORDER to ask for clarification on when the Mayor is supposed to cast a vote, noting a recent procedural misstep of another vote with three “yeas” and two “nays.” Clerk Snider clarified that the Fairbanks General Code (FGC) requires there be four affirmative votes for the adoption of any ordinance or resolution but not for other motions. She added that the Mayor must vote when there is a 3-3 tie and may cast a fourth affirmative vote in a 3-2 scenario.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

- a) Resolution No. 5206 – A Resolution Providing 60 Days to Solicit Additional Community Input for the Redevelopment of 123 Lacey Street Before the City Issues a Request for Proposals. Sponsored by Councilmember Therrien.

**Ms. Therrien**, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to APPROVE Resolution No. 5206.

**Mr. Marney** noted that the resolution did not include a close date and asked when the RFP would end. **Mayor O’Neill** stated that the typical timeframe for such an RFP would be four months, which would put a closing date sometime in August or September.

**Mr. Cleworth** asked who would draft the RFP. **Ms. Therrien** stated that she thought staff—specifically Chief of Staff Sanders—would likely prepare and present it to the Council.

**Mr. Ringstad** questioned the timeline presented. **Ms. Therrien** explained that she had asked the City Attorney to prepare a resolution that aligned with the Mayor's timeline. **Mr. Ringstad** pointed out that this was a large decision and that the Council would need time to review anything new.

**Mayor O'Neill** referenced the timeline she recently distributed of when various reports and steps would occur, reminding the Council that nothing would be finalized without the body's approval.

**Mr. Marney** shared that the consensus from his recent conversations and emails was that people are tired of talking about the Polaris site and would like to see action. He indicated that he would not vote for the resolution and that he considered the City to be three months behind.

**Mr. Cleworth** agreed with Mr. Marney and recounted the amount of work already done on the project. He shared that the local architect who had helped draft an RFP had told him that the City Council seemed to suffer from "analysis paralysis," to which he agreed. He recalled that in November 2025, Mayor O'Neill had asked for feedback on the draft RFP and had shared a goal launching something in early 2026 to potentially award the project. He pointed out that none of that had been done and if the goal had been to gather more input, that could have occurred during that time. **Mr. Cleworth** reported that when progress stalled, the Council took the reins to move forward. He expressed frustration that they had spent many work sessions drafting an RFP that had gone nowhere. He stated that he read the published RFI, and it was very different than the RFP the Council drafted, noting that it seemed to be more definitive on all the things the author wanted. He asserted that there would be no way to put every idea into an RFP and that he would not be surprised if the City got no responses. He reiterated that people are frustrated with waiting.

**Ms. Sprinkle** stated she continues to have discussions with people about the issue and that she would hold her comments until the next meeting, given that Resolution No. 5201 was postponed.

**Ms. Therrien** stated that people she had spoken with indicated a desire for more input and that differing accounts from the community come down to who each Councilmember talks with.

**Mr. Ringstad** suggested that Resolution No. 5206 was confusing, raised more questions, and would put the Council further out from the goal.

**Mayor O'Neill** also expressed frustration and disappointment, having been installed at a pivotal moment in an important process. She recounted that she had shared her plan and vision, furthered her own education, brought new ideas to the table, and asked the Council to give her a chance. She had wondered if Councilmembers did not want to collaborate with her, which made her question whether there was something else afoot, such as shaping an RFP for a specific developer. She asserted that she had been clear with her intentions and did not want to pursue something radically different than what the Council had created—rather, build on it. She recounted that she had been saying the same thing for three months but that it did not seem like anyone was listening. She reiterated that she only wanted a chance and some help collaborating with the Council. She pointed out that she had only recently joined the process and that it seemed fair to take a moment to wrap her hands around it. She claimed that she did not want to fight or erase the Council's work, that accusations about her intent were unfounded, and that she had been transparent about her schedule.

**Ms. Sprinkle** reiterated that she would hold most of her comments until the more robust conversation at the March 23 meeting. She stated that the timeline the Mayor provided was helpful,

and she cared a lot about the process. **Mayor O’Neill** thanked Ms. Sprinkle for the feedback and agreed about caring for the process. She noted that when she came into office, the RFP did not feel right, and she had hoped that taking a moment to pause and ensure proper procedure would be viewed as a responsible approach and the right thing to do.

**Ms. Therrien**, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to POSTPONE Resolution No. 5206 to the Regular Meeting of March 23, 2026.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO POSTPONE RESOLUTION NO. 5206 TO THE REGULAR MEETING OF MARCH 23, 2026 AS FOLLOWS:

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

**Mr. Cleworth** asked Ms. Therrien who would prepare the RFP. **Ms. Therrien** stated that given the lack of support, she would like to withdraw the resolution. Clerk Snider stated that, at this point, the resolution belonged to the body and could not be withdrawn by the sponsor.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION NO. 5206 AS FOLLOWS:

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

b) Resolution No. 5205 – A Resolution Honoring the Clay Street Cemetery Commission. Sponsored by Councilmember Cleworth.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

c) Ordinance No. 6343 – An Ordinance Authorizing the Lease of a Portion of City Hall to the Fairbanks Children’s Museum. Sponsored by Mayor O’Neill.

**Mr. Cleworth**, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to ADVANCE Ordinance No. 6343.

**Mr. Cleworth** expressed appreciation for the work done on the ordinance and fiscal note. He stated that his primary concern was with the proposed 75-year lease. He explained that if, years later, the City needed additional space at City Hall, it would not be allowed because of the lease. He suggested that the lease include a provision for such a scenario. He added that the restoration of the gym floor had been very costly, and the lease should include an obligation to protect it.

**Mr. Ringstad** also expressed concern with the lengthy term and recounted that the Council was told the expectation was only for 40 years. He expressed his preference for a shorter term, as well as a provision to protect the gym floor. He spoke in favor of the overall proposal.

**Ms. Sprinkle** asked when the childcare facility might open. Chief of Staff Sanders addressed concerns about the lease term, noting that a 75-year term aligns with other City agreements. He stated that City Hall is the most expensive building the City owns and that future Councils may not share the same attachment to it; instead of investing millions in the current structure, they may choose a different path. He highlighted the value of securing an anchor tenant to occupy a large portion of the space and noted that an organizational representative would be best suited to answer questions about the facility's opening timeline. **Mayor O'Neall** invited the representative to speak.

*Meredith Maple, Executive Director of Fairbanks Children's Museum (FCM)* – M. Maple shared that they would soon be touring the space with the childcare licensing agent to identify anything that may require modification in order to be licensed. She reported that they had begun submitting grant proposals to help them outfit and furnish the childcare space as soon as possible.

**Ms. Sprinkle** asked whether the daycare would open before the museum. M. Maple confirmed that it would. She stated they would open as soon as they were licensed, staffed, and able to furnish classrooms. **Mr. Ringstad** asked for an estimated timeline. M. Maple stated that they may open by the end of the year. **Ms. Sprinkle** expressed excitement.

**Ms. Therrien** asked M. Maple to meet with the administration to discuss the lease term. She asked for a list of other entities with which the City has long-term leases. M. Sanders provided examples.

**Mr. Marney** expressed concern about whether local youth sports organizations would be able to use the gym. M. Maple indicated that for the first couple of years, use of the space could likely be maintained. She clarified that once they begin building exhibits, such usage would not be feasible.

**Mayor O'Neall** called for objection on the motion to ADVANCE Ordinance No. 6343 and, hearing none, declared the motion CARRIED.

- d) Ordinance No. 6344 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Section 74-302, Exemptions From Gasoline Excise Tax. Sponsored by Mayor O'Neall.

ADVANCED on the CONSENT AGENDA

### WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TO THE CITY COUNCIL

- a) Clay Street Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes of February 4, 2026

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- b) Memorandum from Chief Financial Officer – Permanent Fund Investment Policy Special City Council Work Session

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

### COMMITTEE REPORTS AND COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

**Mr. Cleworth** shared that many years ago, when City Hall was in a building further north on Cushman Street, the administration was not even aware that the City owned the building where

City Hall is now. He explained that when the school district moved out, someone pointed out that the City owned the property, so they took it over. He reported that a developer had offered to perform major renovations and rent the building back to the City. He explained that the City Engineer at the time recommended a different approach so they moved in with only minor updates at relatively little cost with a plan to perform additional renovations over time.

**Ms. Therrien** gave a report on the Legislative Committee and discussed her and Mr. Ringstad's travel plans to Juneau. She shared that the Mayor had provided some suggestions for future legislative priorities. She stated that she was in favor of the idea of the Council getting together for a strategic planning session on a weekend to discuss its direction.

**Mr. Cleworth** asked if the Council could get a copy of the updated Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) from Fairbanks Area Surface Transportation (FAST) Planning.

**Ms. Sprinkle** shared that she attended a FAST Planning steering committee meeting to discuss long-term planning. She encouraged the Council to read an article from the newspaper that day regarding the Fairbanks Economic Development Corporation (FEDC) and its new role as the Alaska Regional Development Organization (ARDOR). She shared that a new committee was forming to help oversee the ARDOR transition. **Mayor O'Neall** asked any Councilmember interested in serving to inform the City Clerk, and it would be discussed at the next work session.

**Mr. Marney** discussed the retirement announcement of City Engineer Robert Pristash, noting his many years of dedication to the City. He wished him well.

### CITY CLERK'S REPORT

Clerk Snider expressed appreciation for the Deputy Clerk attending to duties while she was away.

### CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

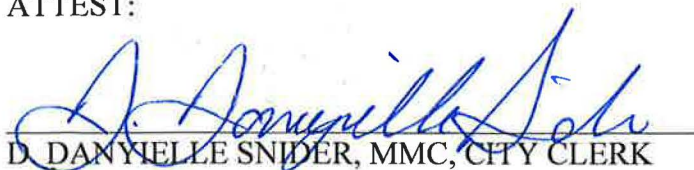
Deputy Attorney Stickel stated that she was grateful to work with people who are passionate about the issues facing the community.

### ADJOURNMENT

**Mayor O'Neall** declared the meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

  
MINDY O'NEALL, MAYOR

ATTEST:

  
D. DANIELLE SNIDER, MMC, CITY CLERK

Transcribed by: CC