



FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, MARCH 23, 2026
FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
800 CUSHMAN STREET, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

The City Council convened at 6:30 p.m. on the above date 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
 Ron Dupee, Police Chief (remotely)
 Andrew Coccaro, Fire Chief
 Kristi Merideth, FECC Manager
 Jeremiah Cotter, Public Works Director
 Robert Pristash, City Engineer
 Jake Merritt, Human Resources Director
 Christina Rowlett, Purchasing Agent
 Jennifer Payan, Accounting Specialist (remotely)

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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

INVOCATION

The invocation was given by City Clerk Danyielle Snider.

FLAG SALUTATION

Mayor O’Neill led the flag salutation.

CITIZENS’ COMMENTS

[Clerk Note: Names of citizens who provide comments may not be spelled correctly if their name was illegible on the physical sign-up sheet or unclear during verbal testimony.]

Jomo Stewart, President of Fairbanks Economic Development Corporation (FEDC) – J. Stewart shared details about FEDC’s 2026 Business Climate Survey and the process of updating their Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) through a series of invitation-only roundtables and public surveys. He reported that the Small Business Accelerator cohort had begun.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if the Business Climate Survey gathered information for a specific purpose. J. Stewart explained that it is used to inform FEDC’s annual economic report. **S. Sprinkle** asked if FEDC looks for any trends. J. Stewart indicated that they do and gave examples of how they engage with local industries and organizations to share the information.

Charles Bettisworth – C. Bettisworth stated that he was speaking as an individual regarding the redevelopment process of the Polaris Building property. He complimented the Mayor on publishing a request for information (RFI) and expressed hope in seeing progress but suggested that the current economy may pose a challenge for developers. He spoke about having been involved with the Polaris for a long time and shared examples of both positive and negative experiences with the process of having proposals reviewed over his 50-year professional career. C. Bettisworth explained that submitting a quality proposal costs the proposer a significant amount of money and that most agencies use a two-step process when developing a request for proposals (RFP) and awarding a contract. He stated that they first address qualifications through a screening process, focusing on financial capabilities, then request detailed proposals from those entities which remain. He recommended using outside counsel to assist in preparing the RFP.

Mr. Cleworth asked C. Bettisworth what his recommendation would be for setting up the screening process. C. Bettisworth suggested the inclusion of reviewers who are both non-biased, professional, and familiar with the process. He added that it is important to develop criteria that is measurable, scalable, and safe from being challenged.

Seth Church – S. Church expressed appreciation for the dedication of the Council in serving the community. He shared his experience with showing visitors around town and the negative impression they get from neglected properties. He spoke about driving others through Wasilla and Palmer, where one area has clear standards and others do not. He spoke of the importance of Fairbanks having a vision towards collective values and noted that certain groups exist to pursue such development. He asserted that he supports positive change and would help any way he could.

Clerk Snider reported that a Jennifer Sierer had signed up in advance to provide Citizens’ Comments remotely but that no such name appeared in the list of Zoom attendees.

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA

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

Mr. Cleworth requested that item 13(b), Ordinance No. 6343, be addressed before item 13(a), Resolution No. 5201, as Amended, as a courtesy to those wishing to speak on the ordinance.

Mayor O’Neill called for objection to the request to reorder the agenda by addressing item 13(b) before 13(a) and hearing none, the agenda was reordered.

Mayor O’Neill called for objection to motion to APPROVE the agenda, as amended, and the consent agenda, and hearing none, declared the motion CARRIED.

Clerk Snider read the consent agenda into the record.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

- a) Regular Meeting Minutes of February 23, 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
5436	Hoarfrost Distilling	Distillery Manufacturer	Hoarfrost Distilling, LLC	3501 Lathrop Street, Unit F
15732	Hoarfrost Distilling	Distillery Retail	Hoarfrost Distilling, LLC	3501 Lathrop Street, Unit F

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

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

Mayor O’Neill called for objection on the motion to WAIVE PROTEST on the alcohol license applications for renewal and hearing none, declared the motion CARRIED.

MAYOR’S COMMENTS AND REPORT

Mayor O’Neill invited Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) Assemblymember Patrick Roach to provide a report.

Assemblymember Roach acknowledged the lack of Assembly representation at City Council meetings and conveyed their renewed commitment to attend regularly, noting that Assemblymember Kelly would attend the following month. He reported on some of the more significant items passed by the Borough in recent months as well as two bills in the state legislature which the Assembly is tracking. He shared that they are currently working on their annual budget and included a plug for their free lifeguard training, citing it as a desperate need in the community.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if the Borough tax exemption for multi-family housing construction would apply to a building that included ground-level retail stores, noting that such could be a possible option for redevelopment of the Polaris site. Assemblymember Roach stated that he did not believe so but would find out. He pointed out that the goal of the ordinance is to encourage multi-family unit development so there may be additional analysis on the idea.

Mr. Cleworth spoke of the proposed name change of Pioneer Park and asked if the Historic Preservation Commission had been involved with the process. Assemblymember Roach stated that he believes the Commission's only participation had been through a meeting hosted by the Parks and Recreation Department and that more opportunities for input were warranted after a recent public comment process at an Assembly meeting had left some individuals feeling disenfranchised.

Ms. Sprinkle suggested that the change to quarterly meetings for many commissions was likely a reason why the Historic Preservation Commission was unable to be more involved and was an example of how that change had been, in her opinion, problematic.

Ms. Therrien noted that the City was interested in House Bill 377 and the financial considerations of public records requests. She asked if the Borough had similar challenges. Assemblymember Roach stated that the Borough does not have bodycam footage like the City, so the overall cost of fulfilling records requests was likely not as high for the Borough.

COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Ms. Therrien shared that HB 377 would have another hearing the coming Thursday at 8:00 a.m., that she would be unavailable to testify. She expressed hope that someone else could testify, noting several questions that still needed to be answered. **Mayor O'Neall** indicated that the administration was aware of the update from the City's lobbyist and would follow up.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- b) Ordinance No. 6343 – An Ordinance Authorizing the Lease of a Portion of City Hall to the Fairbanks Children's Museum. Sponsored by Mayor O'Neall. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

Mayor O'Neall called for testimony.

Patty Merritt – P. Merritt stated that she is a professor in early childhood education and a published author of books on child development. She shared that she has six grandchildren who live within walking distance of the Fairbanks Children's Museum (FCM) and spoke in support of the ordinance. She discussed an acronym pertaining to child development in physical, intellectual, emotional, and social (PIES) areas and how FCM provides opportunities for all of these things for children. She urged the Council to support the ordinance.

Pamela Throop – P. Throop stated that she had been a supporter of FCM since its first open house and that she rents business space in the upper level of the building of the FCM's current location. She expressed concern over seeing the building go dark due to vacancy and the change to downtown that would result from the ordinance. She asserted that the government should not compete with the private industry and that doing so sends a concerning message to the community and runs contrary to the City's oft-stated goal of attracting business downtown. She reiterated that she supports FCM but not the idea of the City renting a portion of City Hall to them.

Ms. Sprinkle recounted that FCM had been hoping to expand or even purchase the building they were in but could not afford it. She asked P. Throop if she was familiar with that situation. P.

Throop stated she and other tenants were informed that FCM was scheduled for an expansion but that the plan was halted when the ordinance and the possibility of the FCM relocating came about.

Brooke Freeburg, Vice President of FCM Board of Directors – B. Freeburg spoke in favor of the ordinance, of the importance of childcare access, and about opportunities for play and growth. She noted that licensed childcare is a major need in the community and stated that the money that would be saved by FCM would play a significant role in furthering its mission.

Caroline Brown, President of FCM Board of Directors – C. Brown shared that she had been involved with FCM for many years despite her own children being much older now. She discussed the commitment from staff and volunteers who have gone above and beyond what is expected, fueled by a belief in the power of play. She stated that the option for more space would allow the FCM to expand, offering more activities that are vital for child development than what they can provide presently. She expressed gratitude for the partnership that the proposal represented. She reported that FCM's budget had always been tight, with current monthly rent over \$10,000, but that they had made do for years, often at the expense of staff. She stated that the FCM is excited to maintain its focus while looking ahead at serving children in the community to a greater extent.

Christi Luper – C. Luper stated that she was speaking as a community member, parent of a child who had benefited greatly from FCM over the years, and as a current board member. She indicated that she strongly supports moving the museum into the area of City Hall vacated by the Boys & Girls Club, noting the importance of maintaining safe spaces dedicated for community children. She discussed the need for high-quality childcare and how the entire facility would become a place for learning, growing, and opportunity. She asserted that it would be a smart use of a public building and would benefit families in the community in many ways.

Sarah Lewis – S. Lewis shared that she had been involved with FCM since the beginning and was now serving on their board of directors. She asserted that this was an incredible opportunity for the City to make an investment in the people of Fairbanks. She discussed the nonprofit mission of the museum and the possibilities that would come from freeing up FCM funds. She spoke of the constraints on federal funding for certain programs due to not owning their current building nor having a long-term lease and how the ordinance would create opportunities. She discussed how FCM had become a game-changer for many families during the long, dark winter months and urged the Council to adopt the ordinance.

Angel Peger – A. Peger stated that she is a full-time employee of FCM and had worked in early childhood development for 20 years, making very little money. She shared that many workers cannot afford to stay in such jobs, even if they want to, because of low wages and a lack of benefits. She noted that the proposal would allow staff to receive healthcare and help retain employees who truly love their work. She discussed the rights of young children and how providing high quality care matters. She asserted that the extra funds would not become a profit but would be reinvested into the program, sharing how part of her job involved awarding free memberships to low-income families, which often results in bringing grateful parents to tears. She stated that FCM and the childcare facility would be a safe place of learning that would benefit the community for decades to come, spreading joy at a time when joy is greatly needed.

Derrick Ball – D. Ball stated that he was speaking in his own capacity and shared that he too served on the board of directors for FCM. He expressed gratitude for the care and curiosity that was

brought into the process of the proposal and spoke enthusiastically about the mission of the FCM. He stated that as a former teacher, he has seen how transformative hands-on learning can be and applauded the concept of investing in the youngest community members. He asserted that the terms of the agreement were foundational to FCM's sustainability and reiterated the organization's appreciation for the opportunity to enter a true partnership.

Paige Poston, Coordinator of Fairbanks Wellness Coalition (FWC) – P. Boston stated that she agreed with all that had been said thus far about the benefit of the ordinance for Fairbanks children. She shared that her focus at FWC is on intergenerational wellness across the community. She explained that FWC hopes to open a drop-in youth program for ages 12 to 18 to fill some of the gap left by the closure of the Boys & Girls Club. She provided details on their teen and youth adult program for ages 16 to 24 as well as their all-ages craft nights.

Ms. Tidwell asked how the FWC would navigate the mix of children and adults sharing space. P. Poston asserted that there would be no concerns as their programs are primarily in the evenings or on weekends and that a plan is in place with the Executive Director of FCM regarding security, access, and using separate entrances. She confirmed that the only intermingling would be deliberate. **Ms. Tidwell** expressed appreciation for FWC's partnership with FCM for the proposal.

Lori Mertes – L. Mertes shared that she is a retired teacher of 35 years who utilized FCM for some of her preschool programming. She added that she is also now a part-time employee of the museum and it is the best job she could imagine during this phase of her life. She spoke in support of the ordinance, citing the museum's need for space to grow.

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

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6343.

Mr. Cleworth shared his gratefulness to hear the FCM leadership's emphasis on maintaining the historical integrity of the building. He thanked City staff for listening to the Council's requests, noting updates to the lease. He discussed his personal history with attending school in the building when it was Main School and asserted that its purpose had always been to serve children in some way. He recounted that the Boys & Girls Club had brought life into City Hall and how, during his time as Mayor, they had worked to remove barriers covering original infrastructure such as the bleachers. He acknowledged the concerns about government competition with the private sector and stated that the City had been conscientious in the past when it came to landlord-tenant relationships. He asserted that this was a different situation, especially given the gymnasium space and the building's original intent to serve children of the community.

Ms. Therrien stated that she whole-heartedly supports the ordinance and discussed its benefit for the community. She noted that FCM would need four years to move into the space which should be ample time to find a new tenant at their existing location.

Mr. Ringstad pointed out that staff had updated the lease agreement to reduce the term length from 75 to 40 years but that the ordinance itself had not been revised to reflect the change.

Mr. Ringstad, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6343 by reducing the lease term in Section 1 from 75 to 40 years.

Ms. Tidwell stated that some funding opportunities required a long-term lease and asked whether 40 years would still be considered long-term. **Mayor O'Neall** confirmed that a representative of FCM had acknowledged that 40 years would meet the necessary criteria.

Mayor O'Neall called for objection on the motion to AMEND Ordinance No. 6343 by reducing the lease term in Section 1 from 75 to 40 years and hearing none, declared the MOTION CARRIED.

Ms. Sprinkle discussed the various leases the City has with other entities and the fact that it would be four years before FCM actually opened for business at the new location.

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6343, as Amended, by reducing the rent amount for years two through five from \$2,000 to \$1,000.

Mr. Ringstad stated that when he reviewed the list of other long-term leases the City has in place, he was shocked to see examples of multiple acres being rented for only \$60 a year. He acknowledged that the City should not be charging top-dollar rents but asserted that it should not be looking to give anything away either.

Mr. Cleworth spoke against changing the lease that had been worked through by the administration, with input from FCM. **Ms. Sprinkle** suggested that other long-term leases seem to charge much less and felt like the suggestion needed to at least be considered.

Mr. Marney indicated that he also felt it was prudent to keep the rent amounts as proposed.

Ms. Therrien concurred that negotiations on the issue had already taken place and seem to be agreeable to both parties. She stated that she could not support the amendment.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6343, AS AMENDED, BY REDUCING THE RENT AMOUNT FOR YEARS TWO THROUGH FIVE FROM \$2,000 TO \$1,000 AS FOLLOWS:

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

There was no additional discussion.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6343, AS AMENDED, AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Marney, Ringstad, Cleworth, Sprinkle, Therrien, Tidwell
NAYS: None
Mayor O'Neall declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6343, as Amended, ADOPTED.

- a) Resolution No. 5201 – 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 at the Regular Meeting of February 9, 2026, and a motion to APPROVE was made and seconded. The resolution was then POSTPONED to the Regular Meeting of February 23, where it was amended and POSTPONED to March 9, at which time it was POSTPONED again. The motion to APPROVE remained on the floor.

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to AMEND Resolution No. 5201, as Amended, by substituting the amended, proposed version.

City Attorney Chard pointed out that the proposed version would require him to release the RFP if the administration did not do so by March 20, 2026, and that it was already March 23. He suggested that the Council may want to discuss the date. **Mr. Cleworth** acknowledged his intent to make appropriate amendments such as this, should the proposed version make it onto the floor.

Ms. Tidwell stated that she was not in favor of the proposed substitute and supported the schedule of listening events as published in the Mayor’s timeline that had been shared with the Council.

Ms. Therrien expressed agreement with Ms. Tidwell. She noted that as a sponsor for the initial resolution, she could not support the proposed version.

Mr. Marney stated that his concern over the timeline was that it put the RFP closing date to the start of September and that the time needed for evaluation by a committee and consideration by the Council would put them into November. He explained that after the October election, he would be termed out and Mr. Ringstad may also no longer be on the Council. He suggested that after six years of hard work, countless meetings, and much discussion, he felt that the two of them were qualified to make a decision on the matter and should have the opportunity to do so.

Ms. Sprinkle pointed out that development was unlikely to commence until 2028 at the earliest and that Councilmembers would not serve on the evaluation committee. She stated that while she wishes it had begun sooner, she supports the Mayor’s plan and prefers the original resolution.

Mr. Ringstad asserted that the sooner the City releases an RFP the sooner it would know of any interest from developers. He suggested that the current timeline would result in development being delayed for another season. **Ms. Sprinkle** reiterated that she believes nothing would commence until 2028. **Mr. Ringstad** clarified his concern that it may not happen until 2029.

Mr. Cleworth recounted that the process had begun six months ago and reviewed all that had transpired. He spoke of the draft RFP attached to the resolution and about the beauty of simplicity. He stated that he had been surprised to see the RFI published right before the last Council meeting, given that no details had been shared with the Council. He pointed out that the Council had already discussed and decided against releasing an RFI months ago, citing redundancy and delays to the process. He stated that he was a realist and understood that if there was not enough votes for the proposed substitute then there was likely not enough votes to pass the existing resolution either. He expressed concern that it would now go in a different direction and that it was unclear whether the Council would have any role in the process other than the final approval of a selected bidder.

Mr. Cleworth asserted that failing to pass the resolution would mean returning to square one, and he suggested that he was concerned the RFI went too far into the weeds. He acknowledged the need for collaboration and compromise, noting that the Council had not even discussed scoring criteria for bids. He spoke of the difference in opinions that would likely come in future steps of the process and reiterated his desire to allow developers freedom with their proposals. He expressed agreement with C. Bettisworth's recommendation regarding an early screening process.

Mayor O'Neall shared that her concern with the proposed substitute was its lack of evaluation criteria, which is a vital component. She acknowledged the hesitation regarding her approach but explained that she had come back with compromises and that her intent was to not move forward on anything without the Council's involvement. She concurred that an RFP should not be too specific and clarified that her desire to include community input would strive for that goal. She expressed excitement for Councilmembers to attend the listening sessions and for the opportunity to crystalize community feedback. She reiterated her hope for a clear path forward working as a team and stated that while she appreciates the proposal's intent, she could not support it.

Mr. Ringstad pointed out that those willing to invest millions of dollars in development will ultimately convey what they are interested in creating and that they would only spend their money in a location where they were wanted. He stated that the more restrictions they include in an RFP, the fewer proposals they will get. **Mayor O'Neall** indicated that she agreed with Mr. Ringstad and reiterated that the current phase of the project was to clarify community feedback to ensure consistency in what locals want to see downtown.

Ms. Sprinkle shared that the timeline document provided by the Mayor was very appreciated and that she trusts that the process will produce a positive result.

Ms. Therrien expressed concern over the proposed version's stipulation that the City Attorney would release an RFP by a certain date if the administration failed to do so and asked for the Attorney's opinion on the matter. Attorney Chard confirmed that he works for the Council and would follow its direction, although it was not his area of expertise. He pointed out that the City's Purchasing Agent and Engineer prepare and publish RFP's regularly. **Ms. Therrien** also expressed concern over the lack of evaluation criteria and encouraged the Mayor to take C. Bettisworth's recommendations into consideration. She added that she values the work put in by Mr. Marney over the last six years and stated that she too would like to see something approved before his and potentially Mr. Ringstad's term on the Council ends.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND RESOLUTION NO. 5201, AS AMENDED, BY SUBSTITUTING THE AMENDED, PROPOSED VERSION AS FOLLOWS:

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

Ms. Tidwell asked if the current amended resolution worked with the Mayor's timeline. **Mayor O'Neall** indicated that when it was amended to include the attached RFP it became problematic to the process that was underway. She recommended either further amendment to remove the attachment or for a new resolution to be introduced when the RFP is ready. She asked for additional

input from the City Attorney regarding steps forward. Attorney Chard confirmed that the stated goals and criteria for the property's development were congruent but that the requirement in Section 3 regarding the attached RFP would need to be stricken or modified to align with the Mayor's process. **Mayor O'Neall** suggested that such a change may mean the Council could pass the resolution immediately with unanimous support.

Ms. Tidwell, seconded by **Ms. Therrien**, moved to AMEND Resolution No. 5201, as Amended, by striking Section 3.

Ms. Tidwell reiterated her support of the administration's shared plan and that she would like to see that process play out. She suggested that the Mayor's timeline is not far off from what others had hoped for and that passing the resolution would ensure moving forward cooperatively.

Mr. Ringstad stated that he would be happier if the resolution included a deadline for RFP publishing. He noted that the Mayor's own timeline had referenced May 1 as the anticipated date and suggested the Council add that if Section 3 was removed. **Mayor O'Neall** concurred and reiterated that she had no intent to come back with a different timeline.

Ms. Sprinkle discussed simply changing the language of Section 3 to include the deadline. **Mayor O'Neall** noted that the motion on the floor was to strike Section 3.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND RESOLUTION NO. 5201, AS AMENDED, BY STRIKING SECTION 3 AS FOLLOWS:

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

Mr. Marney pointed out that the Mayor's plan included a four-month window for the RFP to be open and that all discussions over the last few years had estimated only 30 days. He asked where four months had come from and if that was normal for this type of project. **Mayor O'Neall** discussed the need for a longer RFP window due to the project's size and scope, asserting that four months was appropriate. **Mr. Marney** asked Mayor O'Neall if the idea had come from her recent experience with the Fellowship hosted by the Harvard Graduate School of Design, in cooperation with the Mayors' Institute of City Design. **Mayor O'Neall** explained that it came from her own experience with projects in Fairbanks. **Mr. Marney** asked Mayor O'Neall how many RFP's she had done before. **Mayor O'Neall** reported that in the last 10 years she had been involved with at least a dozen RFP's while serving on the Borough Assembly, a half a dozen with the local Laborers' union, a half a dozen more at her previous job at the Cold Climate Housing Research Center, and another she did as part of her Master program thesis. She asked Mr. Marney how many RFP's he had done. **Mr. Marney** acknowledged that he not done any.

Mr. Ringstad, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to AMEND Resolution No. 5201, as Amended, by adding a new Section 3 to read: "The RFP will be released May 1, 2026."

Mr. Cleworth asked Mr. Ringstad if he intended to set a specific length for the RFP period. **Mr. Ringstad** suggested that the project was not new, that anyone paying attention should be ready and waiting to create a proposal, and that four months felt too long.

Ms. Therrien asked if a closing date of July 31 would be acceptable, given that it would be published by May 1. **Mayor O'Neall** stated that she believes that deadline would set the RFP up to fail and that a timeframe of less than four months would be inappropriate for a proposal of such magnitude, especially given that it would take place during the summer construction season. **Ms. Sprinkle** concurred that the construction season is indeed a busy time for developers.

Ms. Tidwell suggested that 90 days rather than 120 days would likely not change the start date of future construction.

Mayor O'Neall expressed concern that if the deadline needed to be extended, her hands would be tied and she would have to come back to the Council.

Mr. Cleworth reiterated Mr. Ringstad's comment that the project was not new to anyone, that people were likely waiting to get going, and that recent Council meetings had already alerted people that the time was approaching. He pointed out that the City may extend the RFP deadline if no submissions are received but that he would rather put pressure on bidders. **Mayor O'Neall** asked why the Council would prefer a shorter window for proposals if there was concern that there would not be any submissions at the end of the RFP period. **Mr. Cleworth** clarified that he believes three months is enough but that he wants to be courteous to any Councilmember whose term ends in October. Attorney Chard noted that the current motion did not include an RFP closing date and shared procedural options if such was to be entertained.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND RESOLUTION NO. 5201, AS AMENDED, BY ADDING A NEW SECTION 3 TO READ: "THE RFP WILL BE RELEASED MAY 1, 2026.", AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor O'Neall declared the MOTION CARRIED.

Mr. Ringstad, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to AMEND Resolution No. 5201, as Amended, by adding a new Section 4 to read: "The closing date of the RFP will be July 31, 2026."

Ms. Tidwell asked what would happen if the closing date was approaching and a potential bidder contacted them to indicate that they were working on a proposal but would not have it ready to submit by the deadline. **Mayor O'Neall** explained that they could not grant a later closing date to a single potential bidder, and the only option would be to publicly notice an extension that would apply to all potential bidders. **Ms. Sprinkle** pointed out that this had been done before and was not unheard of. **Mayor O'Neall** acknowledged Ms. Sprinkle's comment but stated that it was still uncommon, would take longer, and would add confusion.

Ms. Tidwell stated that she would like to see the resolution passed and, although she would prefer to allow as much time as the Mayor felt appropriate for the RFP, she would consider the proposal an acceptable compromise. She added that the City may get no bids or there may be people waiting to submit. She expressed appreciation in knowing the Council would have the final say.

Ms. Therrien stated that she is unsure whether closing at the end of July or August made much of a difference but that having it published by May 1 mattered more to her. She asked if they had

received anything from the current RFI. **Mayor O’Neill** noted that the RFI was still open and that any information would come through the City’s Purchasing Agent. Chief of Staff Sanders suggested that interrupting an RFI process would be considered bad practice. He pointed out that other steps in the process had also been outside the norm and it would be prudent to allow the RFI to proceed according to proper procurement procedures.

Mayor O’Neill reiterated that the amendment is a bad idea, as serious bidders would need time to prepare a high-quality proposal. She stated that she would do her best to please the Council.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND RESOLUTION NO. 5201, AS AMENDED, BY ADDING A NEW SECTION 4 TO READ: “THE CLOSING DATE OF THE RFP WILL BE JULY 31, 2026.”, AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Marney, Cleworth, Ringstad, Sprinkle

NAYS: Tidwell, Therrien

Mayor O’Neill declared the MOTION CARRIED.

There was no additional discussion.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION NO. 5201, AS AMENDED, AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor O’Neill declared the MOTION CARRIED and Resolution No. 5201, as Amended, APPROVED.

c) Ordinance No. 6344 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Section 74-302, Exemptions From Gasoline Excise Tax. Sponsored by Mayor O’Neill. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

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

Chief Financial Officer Margarita Bell explained how the ordinance clarified items in the Fairbanks General Code (FGC) and would make the language consistent with state law.

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6344.

Ms. Sprinkle stated that she was excited to fix an issue she had heard discussed for many years.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6344 AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor O’Neill declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6344 ADOPTED.

NEW BUSINESS

- a) Ordinance No. 6345 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Section 74-40, Sales and Excise Tax Requirements Definitions, Section 74-116, Room Rental Tax Definitions, and Section 74-118, Room Rental Tax Levy and Collection to Add Marketplace Facilitator. Sponsored by Mayor O’Neill.

ADVANCED on the CONSENT AGENDA

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TO THE CITY COUNCIL

- a) Council Appointee to the FEDC ARDOR Committee

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to APPOINT Ms. Sprinkle to the FEDC ARDOR Committee, with Mr. Marney as an alternate.

Ms. Sprinkle expressed appreciation for being nominated but asked to remove herself from consideration. She explained that she is trying to be smart about allocating her time across various commitments tied to her service to the City. **Mr. Marney** indicated that he was willing to serve in the role until his term on the Council ended.

Mayor O’Neill called for objection to the APPOINTMENT of Mr. Marney to the FEDC ARDOR Committee and hearing none, declared the motion CARRIED.

- b) Appointment to the Permanent Fund Advisory Board

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- c) Chena Riverfront Commission Meeting Minutes of October 22, 2025

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- d) Historic Preservation Commission Meeting Minutes of December 2, 2025

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- e) Historic Preservation Commission Special Meeting Minutes of January 2, 2026

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- f) Board of Plumber Examiners Meeting Minutes of December 16, 2025

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- g) Fairbanks Diversity Council Meeting Minutes of November 18, 2025

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

h) Fairbanks Diversity Council Meeting Minutes of January 13, 2026

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

i) February 21, 2026 Fairbanks Diversity Council Strategic Planning Work Session Synopsis

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. Cleworth spoke of the appointment to the Permanent Fund Advisory Board approved on the consent agenda. He stated that he did not know the individual but found her background fascinating and expressed interest in the City partnering with the program she oversees at the university. He thanked the City Clerk for providing a copy of the updated Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) from Fairbanks Area Surface Transportation (FAST) Planning. He reported that he had never heard of the 8th Avenue Pass project that was included in the TIP, which he found strange as such projects would typically be recommended by the City for consideration. **Mr. Cleworth** expressed concern with the projected \$7.3MM cost for the Chena Riverwalk project, pointing out that the City completed the entire South Cushman Street reconstruction project for less than that. He asserted that there had to be better uses for the money, noting that many City sidewalks are not ADA-compliant and that a short riverwalk would not be a good use of taxpayer dollars. He suggested that if the City was asked to provide a funding match for the project, the Council should say no, and that he felt strongly enough about it to draft a resolution in opposition to the plan. He referenced a photo that had been provided and explained that it had been taken by the owner of the Arctic Traveler's Gift Shop who asked that it be shared with Councilmembers. He pointed out that they had a little over one month before the approved publish date of the RFP for the 123 Lacey Street project and requested that it be included on the agenda for the next work session.

Mr. Ringstad shared that there had been much discussion in the State legislature recently regarding the State budget. He reported that a hearing would soon be held for a bill concerning charges for public records requests, which was one of the City's legislative priorities for 2026. He spoke of the likelihood of a complete restructuring of the tax system across Alaska as part of the upcoming liquid natural gas project and to the importance of municipalities having a seat at the table. He shared that his first meeting with the Chena Riverfront Commission made it clear that others share **Mr. Cleworth's** shock at the price tag of the proposed riverwalk project. He spoke of the FNSB budget and contributions to Explore Fairbanks over the years. He reported that the criminal trial for the physical assault he experienced nine months ago had finally commenced.

Mr. Marney expressed agreement that \$7MM for a riverwalk was not as high a priority for the City as updating some of its sidewalks. He reported on his attendance at the Fairbanks Diversity Council (FDC) meeting and expressed support for the Mayor's efforts to improve that body.

Ms. Sprinkle also complimented the Mayor's work on the FDC and stated that she did not have any committee reports. She added that she did not love the cost of the riverwalk proposal and would be interested in details about maintenance costs.

Ms. Tidwell shared that as a member of the FAST Planning Policy Board, she held similar concerns about the riverwalk project. She reported that some individuals had become very fixated on making the project a reality but that she agreed that the money could be used in much better ways for the community. She expressed excitement at the approval of the FCM lease as well as seeing a representative from the Borough Assembly at the meeting. **Ms. Tidwell** suggested the Council review the 2% discount it gives for taxes paid by the 15th of the month.

Ms. Therrien stated that she was also impressed with the newly appointed Permanent Fund Advisory Board member's resume. She asked the Clerk to review and provide feedback to the Council on Senate Bill 64, pertaining to elections. She discussed the importance of providing testimony at the HB 377 hearing. She reviewed other legislation of potential interest to the City.

Mayor O'Neall reported that she had attended the last Chamber of Commerce meeting where Katherine Yarrow had been announced as the organization's new President and CEO. She discussed an internal meeting that would allow the Police Chief to review answers to questions posed regarding the HB 377. She informed Mr. Cleworth that there would not be much to discuss at the April 7 work session regarding the RFP, as the RFI would not close until April 6. She added that she plans to have the RFP ready to review by the April 21 work session. **Mr. Cleworth** stated that he would still like to have the item on the agenda for the next work session so that the Council could discuss the topic, if desired. He acknowledged that the Council could not expect to get into much detail, but he was nervous about putting too much pressure for any further discussion into the second half of April. He stated that he would like to review evaluation criteria in particular. **Mayor O'Neall** indicated that she hoped to have some updates by April 7, which she would be happy to share. She stated that as a member of the FAST Planning Policy Board she also had some concerns about the riverwalk project and reported that the Technical Committee had recommended approval of the proposal. She reported that maintenance between the Borough and City had been handled amicably but expressed disappointment that the Alaska Railroad had not lived up to its commitment regarding the associated land and then decided to charge such a large amount.

Mr. Ringstad asked for clarification on how the project would be approved. **Mayor O'Neall** explained that approvals vary based on funding sources, particularly if there is a match involved.

Ms. Tidwell recounted that while the Technical Committee had recommended the project, she was unsure if the Policy Board had approved it. **Mayor O'Neall** stated she would review her notes.

Mr. Cleworth added that a maintenance agreement must be in place anytime a project is adopted, and the City would have to confirm its support before anything was finalized. He recounted that cheaper alternative designs and compromises had been presented and noted that the bike path was redundant, given the path along the opposite side of the river. **Ms. Tidwell** shared that funding challenges exist if the entire project was not a "river walk."

Mayor O'Neall addressed one of Mr. Ringstad's concerns and clarified that the Governor was meeting with boroughs that contained land that the natural gas pipeline would pass through. **Mr. Ringstad** asserted that even if the pipeline does not enter city limits, the City would still be impacted. **Mayor O'Neall** indicated that she agreed and would be happy to chat more with him.

CITY CLERK'S REPORT

Clerk Snider shared that she had provided historical research from the 1960s regarding the Pioneer Park name change to the Director of the Borough Parks and Recreation Department. She reported attending hearings and keeping track of SB 64 and HB 377 and that the Alaska Association of Municipal Clerks would likely weigh in on HB 377.

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 receive guidance on the Open Meetings Act from the City Attorney.

Mayor O'Neall called for objection on the motion to ENTER into Executive Session and, hearing none, declared the motion CARRIED.

Mayor O'Neall called for a brief recess at 9:10 p.m., after which the City Council reconvened in Executive Session.

- a) Open Meetings Act Guidance from City Attorney [permissible under State law, including the provision at AS 44.62.310(c)(3)]

The Executive Session began at 9:20 p.m. Those present included Mayor O'Neall, Mr. Cleworth, Ms. Therrien (remotely), Ms. Tidwell, Mr. Marney, Mr. Ringstad, Ms. Sprinkle, Clerk Snider, Attorney Chard, and Chief of Staff Sanders. The Executive Session concluded at 10:05 p.m.

Mr. Cleworth stated that the Council met in an Executive Session for Open Meetings Act Guidance from the City Attorney. He affirmed that no action had been taken.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Ringstad, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to ADJOURN.

Mayor O'Neall declared the meeting adjourned at 10:06 p.m.


MINDY O'NEALL, MAYOR

ATTEST:


D. DANYIELLE SNIDER, MMC, CITY CLERK

Transcribed by: CC