



FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, APRIL 13, 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
 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
 Jeremiah Cotter, Public Works Director
 Robert Pristash, City Engineer
 Teal Soden, Public Information Officer (remotely)
 Jennifer Payan, Grants Administrator (remotely)

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

At the request of Mayor O’Neill, **Mr. Ringstad** read the land acknowledgement.

INVOCATION

The invocation was given by City Clerk Danyielle Snider.

FLAG SALUTATION

At the request of Mayor O’Neill, **Ms. Tidwell** 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.]

David Hayden – D. Hayden shared that he is an architect and also serves on the board of directors for the Downtown Association of Fairbanks. He listed several large projects he had been involved

with in the downtown area and stated that he has a different vision for the City-owned property at 123 Lacey Street. He noted that the surrounding structures block sunlight and views, suggesting that the location was not ideal for any large new building or activity. D. Hayden asserted that the downtown area could use a venue for live music and provided a handout demonstrating his vision. He indicated that the handout was his intellectual property and not for the Council to keep or share.

Mr. Marney acknowledged that the downtown core lacked musical venues and that he liked the idea. D. Hayden shared that his vision would not include a kitchen in order to encourage patronage of nearby restaurants. He added that downtown needs more attractions for younger people.

Ms. Sprinkle asked D. Hayden if his concept would also allow for showing films. D. Hayden shared that he would use a flat floor with removable theater-style seating. He discussed the similarities and differences between his idea and the former Blue Loon venue in Ester.

Ms. Therrien asked D. Hayden if he envisioned having dancing at the venue. D. Hayden stated that he did. **Ms. Therrien** asked D. Hayden if he had any interested investors. D. Hayden indicated that he did not but that he had a strong client base he intended to contact.

Mayor O'Neill asked D. Hayden if he was aware that the Request for Proposal (RFP) would be published by May 1 and whether he believed 60 days was sufficient time to prepare a proposal. D. Hayden stated that he was aware of the RFP release date but did not know if 60 days was adequate.

Meredith Coats – M. Coats spoke of the proposed Chena Riverwalk project and how neither she nor the neighbors she spoke to had even heard it, despite it being adjacent to their subdivision. She questioned the assertion by someone involved with the project that about 1,200 people a day use the existing path on the south side of the river. She recounted that it was better to raise concerns during the design phase rather than after construction begins. She pointed out that anyone could walk from Noble Street to Pioneer Park and be along the river the majority of the trip.

Ms. Therrien acknowledged that M. Coats had called her over the weekend. She asked M. Coats if she was happy with the current path. M. Coats indicated that she is and asserted that Fairbanks is a vehicle-focused town. She stated that she did not understand the importance of spending so much money on such a project and that it would likely not get much use six months out of the year.

Julie Jones, Executive Director of Festival Fairbanks – J. Jones spoke in favor of the Chena Riverwalk project and against Resolution No. 5207. She shared that Festival Fairbanks had been involved with the project for a long time but had to hand it off when the Alaska Railroad expressed a desire to work with the local municipality. She acknowledged that the price tag for the current phase was overblown and that they believe the cost would drop significantly, potentially down to \$3MM – \$4MM, if Fairbanks Area Surface Transportation (FAST) Planning moved forward with an RFP. She stated that they also support the project's elevated walkway component which would go over the wetland area. She pointed out that the railroad could not sell that land for other commercial development due to the condition of the ground. She asserted that elevated walkways are highly enjoyed in other parts of Alaska with similar environments.

Ms. Therrien asked to confirm the details about the land ownership. J. Jones explained that the Alaska Railroad was originally supposed to convey the land at no cost but decided instead to sell it. She recounted that funding had been in place for years but that planning had delayed the project,

during which time the cost increased. **Ms. Therrien** asked J. Jones if she had been attending FAST Planning meetings. J. Jones confirmed that she had attended recent meetings.

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA

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

Ms. Therrien. pulled item 14(a), Resolution No. 5207, from the consent agenda.

Mayor O’Neill called for objection to 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.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

a) Regular Meeting Minutes of March 9, 2026

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

b) Regular Meeting Minutes of March 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
1639	Alaska Salmon Bake	Restaurant/Eating Place	Malemute, Inc.	2300 Airport Way
5780	Jazz Bistro Havana Nights	Restaurant/Eating Place	Bluenote Create, Inc.	529 4th Avenue
5926	FatBurger	Restaurant/Eating Place	ArcticMonty, LLC	3548 Airport Way
5169	HooDoo Brewing Company	Brewery Manufacturer	Fairbanks Fermentation, LLC	1951 Fox Avenue
3118	V.F.W. Post #3629	Club	Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 3629	324 2nd Street

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

Ms. Sprinkle asked if there was any additional documentation. Clerk Snider explained that only a memo is provided for renewals unless a departmental protest or unusual circumstances existed.

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

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.

- b) The Fairbanks City Council held a public hearing and considered the following Package Store Sampling Endorsement Application:

Type/ID: Package Store Sampling Endorsement
Primary Lic.#: Package Store, #703
DBA: Gavora’s Fine Wine
Applicant: Market Basket, Inc.
Location: 250 3rd Street, Fairbanks

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

Mr. Ringstad, seconded by **Ms. Therrien**, moved to WAIVE PROTEST on the Package Store Sampling Endorsement Application.

Mayor O’Neill called for objection on the motion to WAIVE PROTEST on the Package Store Sampling Endorsement Application and hearing none, declared the motion CARRIED.

REPORT FROM FAIRBANKS AK NATIVE ORGANIZATIONS (every other month)

Mayor O’Neill shared that representatives from local organizations would be at the next meeting.

MAYOR’S COMMENTS AND REPORT

Mayor O’Neill provided a staffing report for the Finance and Legal Departments. She shared that Public Works Facilities Manager Roy Bryant retired and Alex Lexa was promoted to the role. She noted that City Engineer Robert Pristash would retire at the end of April, with Tim Zinza serving as Acting City Engineer. She reported that employees had completed enough risk management and safety training hours to save the City thousands of dollars in insurance premiums through the provider’s loss-control incentive program. **Mayor O’Neill** noted that their voluntary property cleanup program had launched and provided an update on the RFP timeline for the property at 123 Lacey Street. She shared that she would be completing the Fellowship hosted by the Harvard Graduate School of Design and announced that a dedicated Fellow and resource team from the school’s program would be available to the City for consulting for some time.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if the Council would have an RFP draft to review after the Mayor’s return. **Mayor O’Neill** replied affirmatively.

Mr. Marney asked if anything of note had come by way of the Request for Information (RFI) process. **Mayor O’Neill** shared that they had not received any actual responses but had fielded several calls asking whether submitting an RFI was required to later submit an RFP.

Ms. Therrien asked if there were any surprising or interesting ideas during the listening sessions. **Mayor O’Neill** shared that there had been consistent themes about safety in the downtown area,

citing concerns over mental health and the unhoused population, as well as lighting, sidewalks, and challenges in being able to move around downtown as a pedestrian.

Ms. Sprinkle noted that Whitehorse, Canada had recently been discussed by staff as a model for design, zoning, and building incentives. **Mayor O’Neill** agreed and added that Whitehorse has a track record of growth. She mentioned Leavenworth, WA as another example.

COUNCILMEMBERS’ COMMENTS

Mr. Ringstad shared that he and Ms. Therrien would be in Juneau over the next few days to meet with legislators. He spoke of the meetings between the Governor and a group of borough mayors regarding potential changes to property taxes and the liquid natural gas pipeline. He noted that the City Mayor and those from other cities in the same corridor were not included in the discussions. He pointed out that the issue was not on the City’s authorized list of legislative priorities and thus he sought the Council’s consensus as to whether he and Ms. Therrien could speak with anyone about the matter in Juneau. There was consensus amongst the Council to allow them to do so. **Mayor O’Neill** provided an update on discussions related to the issue that she has been a part of. She stated she felt it would be an appropriate topic for them to address.

Ms. Therrien stated that another priority she and Mr. Ringstad would focus on is the proposed increase in defined benefit contributions for the Alaska Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS). She asked to be excused through May 9 as she would be out of the country and unable to attend remotely. **Mayor O’Neill** called for objection to excusing Ms. Therrien through May 9 and heard none.

Mr. Cleworth spoke of the potential increase from the current 22% contribution level by employers under PERS. He recounted that when the Council adopted the City’s 2026 legislative priorities, they had included backup information to show how much Fairbanksans had paid over the years to cover legacy debt of the PERS system. He discussed the problems with how the system had been managed and how important it is for the City to keep tabs on the situation. **Mr. Ringstad** asked when the problems first came to light. **Mr. Cleworth** recounted that it was 2004 or 2005.

UNFINISHED 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. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

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

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Ms. Therrien**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6345.

Mr. Cleworth stated that some of the language in the ordinance was confusing and asked for clarification. CFO Bell clarified the ordinance is meant to ensure that those involved with the process of booking short-term rentals would be informed of the duty to collect and remit associated taxes. **Mr. Cleworth** pointed out other language using the word “sale” that still seemed confusing.

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Mr. Cleworth**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6345 by striking the words “sale or” after the word “transaction” in the underlined bold text in Sections 1 and 2.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if the City Attorney thought the change was appropriate. Attorney Chard confirmed that the amendment would make the language clearer and noted that many terms are included in the definitions at the start of that chapter of the Fairbanks General Code (FGC).

Mayor O’Neill called for objection on the motion to AMEND Ordinance No. 6345 by striking the words “sale or” after the word “transaction” in the underlined bold text in Sections 1 and 2 and hearing none, declared the motion CARRIED.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6345, AS AMENDED, AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor O’Neill declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6345, as Amended, ADOPTED.

NEW BUSINESS

a) Resolution No. 5207 – A Resolution Opposing the Current Design and Funding Approach for FAST Planning’s Chena Riverwalk Stage III Project and Encouraging Consideration of More Cost-Effective Alternatives. Sponsored by Councilmembers Tidwell, Cleworth, Ringstad, and Therrien.

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to APPROVE Resolution No. 5207.

Ms. Therrien recounted that Ms. Tidwell had discussed possible amendments during the last work session. **Ms. Tidwell** noted that the changes had already been incorporated prior to introduction. She reviewed the updates and clarified the intent not to oppose the idea of a new riverwalk but rather the current plan due to its high estimated cost. She confirmed that the project would be considered at the next FAST Planning meeting, so the timing was prudent. **Ms. Sprinkle** stated that the primary opposition was related to cost but asked if they had an acceptable threshold. **Ms. Tidwell** acknowledged the many moving parts and parties involved, that it was unclear what direction it would go, and that nothing was definite at this time. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked whether the entity expected to maintain the riverwalk was included in the discussions. **Ms. Tidwell** confirmed that the Borough was very involved. **Mayor O’Neill** added that the Borough had made a verbal commitment for maintenance and a financial match, which was great for the City.

Mr. Cleworth explained that the primary purpose of the resolution was to affirm that the City did not intend to commit matching funds nor assume ownership or maintenance of the riverwalk. He asserted that the path was impractical and redundant and that he wished alternative options were being considered. He suggested there were better uses for the funds and that the City’s primary concern should be updating sidewalks non-compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Mr. Marney expressed agreement and thanked those who had worked on the resolution.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION NO. 5207 AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor O'Neall declared the MOTION CARRIED and Resolution No. 5207 APPROVED.

- a) Resolution No. 5208 – A Resolution Authorizing the City of Fairbanks to Apply for and Accept Funding from the Bureau of Justice Assistance for the FFY2025 Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant. Sponsored by Mayor O'Neall.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TO THE CITY COUNCIL

- a) Appointments to the Building Code & Landscape Review & Appeals Commission

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- b) 2026 Quarter 1 Sole Source Procurement Report

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mayor O'Neall asked Chief of Staff Michael Sanders to provide a report on the allocations for the year's Storefront Improvement Program. M. Sanders shared that there were eight applicants and that seven were eligible for the grant. He reviewed the allocated amounts and provided a brief synopsis of the respective projects. He stated that \$241,103 of the available \$250,000 was allocated and that projects approved in 2025 should be completed in the coming months.

Mr. Ringstad asked when the new projects would begin. M. Sanders explained that because the process began earlier this year, many projects would be completed in 2026. He added that some projects had already begun.

Mr. Marney asked for the allocation details to be emailed to the Council. M. Sanders confirmed that he would prepare a memo similar to what was provided last year. **Mr. Marney** asked for an update on the log cabin on First Avenue. M. Sanders reported that the Yukon Quest folks still had a lot of work to do after 16 years of tenancy and had extended their move-out date to June 1. He stated that a Public Works crew had already done a walkthrough to assess any necessary repairs. He shared that five proposals had been submitted from entities interested in taking over the building and that the Council should see more on the matter in the coming months.

Ms. Therrien asked if the building would be vacant for a while. M. Sanders clarified that while they anticipate fairly quick occupancy, it would not happen on June 1 as Public Works would need to complete some repairs and other work first. **Mayor O'Neall** stated that the target date for new a new tenant is by the Golden Days street fair in July.

Mr. Cleworth noted that based on the Mayor's provided timeline, the Polaris RFP would have to be introduced at the Regular Meeting of April 27 for Council approval. He asked that the document be available for review prior to the April 21 work session to avoid having to digest the entire thing that morning. He shared his concern of how the Council would incorporate anything discussed at the work session into the final version of the RFP for introduction on April 27. **Mayor O'Neall** confirmed the Council may consider amendments or a proposed substitute once it was introduced. **Mr. Cleworth** stated that he did not find the RFI to be very beneficial and reiterated the importance of making sure the RFP is simple and inviting.

Ms. Sprinkle shared that she had taken the survey that the administration published about the community's vision for downtown and that she hoped it would be useful in future plans.

Ms. Therrien stated that she was sorry she would be gone when the Council finalizes the RFP but expressed trust that everyone would do their best in preparing it for publishing.

Mayor O'Neall expressed appreciation for the participation in the City Council strategic planning session that had occurred over the past weekend. She stated she believes it was a positive experience for the Council as a body and was a good thing for the citizens of Fairbanks.

CITY CLERK'S REPORT

Clerk Snider shared that both she and the Deputy City Clerk would be gone for the Regular Meeting of May 18 due to attending a training. She confirmed that she would coordinate with the City Attorney to ensure someone could operate the necessary technology and that she would still attend remotely. She noted that a change of meeting date was not feasible due to the Memorial Day holiday and other constraints that month.

CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Attorney Chard shared that he would be out of the office but available by phone the next few days.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor O'Neall declared the meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.


MINDY O'NEALL, MAYOR

ATTEST:


D. DANYELLE SNIDER, MMC, CITY CLERK

Transcribed by: CC