



FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, MAY 11, 2026
FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
800 CUSHMAN STREET, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

The City Council convened at 6:30 p.m. on the above date, following a 5:30 p.m. Citizen Engagement Academy Graduation, 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)
 Richard Sweet, Deputy Police Chief
 Andrew Coccaro, Fire Chief
 Timothy Zinza, City Engineer
 Jake Merritt, Human Resources Director (remotely)
 Christina Rowlett, Purchasing Agent
 Brenda McFarlane, Community Response Coordinator
 Shannon Lam, Executive Assistant

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Mayor O’Neill 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.]

Bruce Wammack – B. Wammack stated that he was speaking on behalf of a long-time friend and client, Edward Clark, Jr., regarding the property at 525 Seventh Avenue. He explained that in the early 2000s the structure had been deemed uninhabitable and was condemned and demolished by the City. He shared that E. Clark had been trying for years to get the property's title transferred to him after the passing of both of his parents and had finally received it a month prior, only to learn of a \$29,740 lien that had been assessed for the cost of demolition. B. Wammack estimated that the lien had grown to over \$170,000 due to interest but noted that E. Clark was now in a nursing home in Colorado, hoping to sell the property and use any proceeds to cover the cost of his care.

Ms. Sprinkle asked for clarification on the timeline of events and ownership. B. Wammack clarified that E. Clark's parents had purchased the home in 1980 and that both had passed by the time the lien had been assessed in 2008. He reiterated that it had taken all this time for E. Clark to get the title. **Ms. Sprinkle** suggested that it would be unusual for a lien to come as a surprise in such situations and asked B. Wammack who he believed should be responsible for the bill. B. Wammack acknowledged that it would have been the last surviving owner, E. Clark's mother, but pointed out she had been infirm for some time before her passing 18 years ago. He added that title companies had changed their rules and now only disclose liens after there is a potential buyer.

Mr. Cleworth asked about the current value of the property. B. Wammack reported that the assessed value had hovered around \$20,850 and could probably sell for \$30,000 - \$40,000. **Mr. Cleworth** asked if the property taxes were current. B. Wammack shared that E. Clark had paid all taxes owed three years ago but that he believes the last two years were unpaid.

Ms. Therrien asked if the owner would be willing to transfer the property for full payment of the debt. B. Wammack explained that he is now working with the grandson who has power of attorney over E. Clark and that he is unsure of where the grandson stands on the matter.

Jarrold Welsh (via Zoom) – J. Welsh shared that he lives in the Shannon Park subdivision and expressed concern over numerous instances of both standard and non-street-legal vehicles routinely driving well beyond the speed limit, particularly on weekends, evenings, and when children are walking to or from school. He noted that children regularly play in the neighborhood and that it was only a matter of time before a tragedy happens. He reported that the community's social media group had countless examples of other residents sharing his concerns. J. Welsh expressed appreciation for the Public Works Director and City Engineer being receptive to his recent communications and for installing an additional speed table and radar near his home but noted that it would not solve the larger neighborhood problems. He asked the City to expand traffic calming measures in the subdivision, reconsider additional devices at the calming circles, approve a permitting process for individuals to install their own temporary speed humps, and consider converting certain yield signs to stop signs on the cross streets along D Street.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if he could provide his comments in writing. J. Welsh stated he would.

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA

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

Mr. Cleworth pulled item 14(b), Resolution No. 5213, from the consent agenda.

Ms. Sprinkle pulled item 14(a), Resolution No. 5212, from the consent agenda.

Mayor O’Neill 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 application for transfer of location and ownership:

- Type/License: Beverage Dispensary, License 4504
- To DBA: Gather Fairbanks
- To Owner: Fairbanks Brands, LLC
- To Location: 714 3rd Avenue
- From DBA: Venue Fairbanks
- From Owner: Go Alaska Media, LLC
- From Location: 514 2nd Avenue

Ms. Therrien, seconded by Ms. Sprinkle, moved to WAIVE PROTEST on the alcohol license application for transfer of location and ownership.

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

Mr. Marney stated that he would like to hear from the applicant about their business plan.

Isaiah Mangum, Owner of Gather Fairbanks – I. Mangum shared that he had previously been a part owner, along with his parents, of a business downtown called Venue Fairbanks which, for over a decade, was a community space filled with art, coffee, and occasional events that included alcohol. He reported that after Venue closed a year and a half earlier, he and his wife purchased another building downtown with the hope to create something similar. I. Mangum explained that Gather Fairbanks would also operate as an art gallery, co-working space, and have other tenants such as a bookstore and crystal shop, with alcohol sales being a small part of what they do, albeit an important one for their financial sustainability. Mr. Marney thanked him for the information.

Ms. Tidwell shared that she had been inside the new location and asked if they intend to keep the same general format or open a business that regularly serves alcohol. I. Mangum confirmed that alcohol sales had always been and would continue to be event-based and low-key, with no goal of becoming a typical bar. He reiterated the desire to make a welcoming space for the community.

Mayor O’Neill called for objection on the motion to WAIVE PROTEST on the alcohol license application for transfer of location and ownership and hearing none, declared the motion CARRIED.

- b) The Fairbanks City Council held a public hearing and considered the following alcohol license application for transfer of ownership:

Type/License: Restaurant/Eating Place, License 5816
To DBA: Ajimi Japanese Restaurant
To Owner: MNP Fairbanks, LLC
To Location: 69 College Road
From DBA: Ajimi Japanese Restaurant
From Owner: Ajimi, Inc.
From Location: 69 College Road

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

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to WAIVE PROTEST on the alcohol license application for transfer of ownership.

There was no discussion on the motion.

Mayor O’Neill called for objection on the motion to WAIVE PROTEST on the alcohol license application for transfer of ownership and hearing none, declared the motion CARRIED.

- c) The Fairbanks City Council held a public hearing and considered the following two alcohol license applications for transfer of ownership:

Types/Licenses: Distillery Retail & Manufacturer, Licenses 15732 & 5436
To DBA: Hoarfrost Distilling
To Owner: Dark Lamb Industries, LLC
To Location: 3501 Lathrop Street, Unit F
From DBA: Hoarfrost Distilling
From Owner: Hoarfrost Distilling, LLC
From Location: 3501 Lathrop Street, Unit F

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

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

There was no discussion on the motion.

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

- d) The Fairbanks City Council held a public hearing and considered the following new alcohol license application with endorsements:

Type/License: Beverage Dispensary Tourism, License 5656

Endorsements: Hotel/Motel Endorsement & Restaurant Endorsement
DBA: Block 13 Hotel
Applicant: Block 13 Hotel, LLC
Location: 575 1st Avenue

Mayor O’Neill called for Public Testimony.

Frank Eagle – F. Eagle shared that he had been a tenant in the location being considered for over 20 years and agreed that another restaurant in that space would benefit the community. He asserted that the application did not, however, fulfill the state requirements for a “beverage dispensary tourism” license. He explained that he had applied for the same license in 2023 in an attempt to make the sale of his former business, Lavelle’s Bistro, more appealing to a prospective buyer, but had been denied by the Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) Board. He added that he had appealed the decision but was ultimately denied when the judge ruled that the provisions of the law which required changes or improvements that would encourage tourism, rather than maintaining the status quo, had not been met. F. Eagle pointed out that Block 13 was doing the exact same as he had done three years prior, yet their application was approved by the ABC Board, pending review by the local governing bodies. He asserted that the same statutes identified by the judge in his case still applied and had not been met by the applicant; he added that the City Council should not condone a non-legislative, administrative board ignoring the law and past rulings from a judge. He admitted that he was pursuing the issue primarily on principle and asked that the Council send a stern message to the ABC Board. F. Eagle expressed frustration with the law being disregarded across all levels of government, with little to no oversight. He noted the applicant was warned that a similar license had been denied by the ABC Board in the past and suggested that they must have used influence to get the approval. He urged the Council to protest the application.

Ms. Sprinkle asked who had warned the applicant about the past denial. F. Eagle clarified that he had told them directly and that he emailed the ABC Board and copied the applicant. He added that he has had numerous conversations with them over the years. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked if F. Eagle’s denial had been the reason he could not sell his business. F. Eagle stated it was not the reason they shut down the restaurant but that they may still be operating if the application had been approved.

Ms. Therrien asked to clarify the reason for F. Eagle’s denial. F. Eagle shared that he was told his plans did not meet the provisions for an improvement that would encourage or enhance tourism. **Ms. Therrien** asked if his plans had included such work. F. Eagle reported that his application had demonstrated several updates and renovations to the space but that the judge deemed those to be maintenance-related and insufficient to meet the requirement in the statute. He provided additional details about Block 13’s decisions regarding alcohol licensing when the hotel was built in 2001. **Ms. Therrien** stated that she was confused over the various types of licenses. F. Eagle explained that “tourism” licenses were for places like larger hotels and were not limited by population like certain other alcohol licenses.

Mr. Cleworth noted that F. Eagle was not the owner of the property and asked if that distinction had been a factor in the denial. F. Eagle reported that it had been brought up to the ABC Board and that it may have contributed to the denial but pointed out that the obligation to provide more significant renovations was outstanding and should also apply to Block 13. He noted that the application before the Council did not include any more renovations than his 2023 proposal.

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

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to PROTEST the new alcohol license application with endorsements.

Ms. Therrien suggested that the proposal did not meet the qualifications for a beverage dispensary tourism license and that the applicant could seek a different type of alcohol license.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if there was a difference in what could be served under the different licenses. Clerk Snider explained that there was not a difference in what could be sold. She noted that the number of beverage dispensary licenses that may be issued within an area was limited by population. She discussed additional requirements in the Fairbanks General Code (FGC) regarding an applicant’s ability to contribute to the revitalization of the downtown area.

Attorney Chard suggested that if the Council was considering pursuing a protest of the application, further discussion would be prudent regarding FGC Sec. 14-178(a)(11), which states:

“If an application is for a tourism license under AS 04.11.400(d), then the city council will require the applicant to show that the issuance of an additional beverage dispensary license to a tourist facility will, in fact, encourage tourism in the city. The applicant must prove that tourism will constitute a majority of the business of the beverage dispensary license.”

Ms. Tidwell asked if the City Clerk had communicated with the applicant and invited them to the meeting. Clerk Snider confirmed she had and that the applicant had provided the documentation prior to the deadline for publishing meeting materials. **Ms. Tidwell** asked where the City stood in regard to the number of population-limited alcohol licenses. Clerk Snider reported that they are grossly over the limit for beverage dispensary licenses but that licenses were “grandfathered” in when the law to limit by population was passed.

Mr. Marney asked if F. Eagle would be eligible to apply for the tourism license. Attorney Chard acknowledged that it was difficult to elaborate on State statutes that are applied by the ABC Board as well as whether F. Eagle would have been under different obligations as a tenant versus a building owner. He pointed out that the Block 13 application included a narrative about tourism being served by opening a restaurant in a currently vacant space and revitalizing the downtown core area. **Mr. Marney** asked how much weight a local governing body’s protest carries with the ABC Board. Attorney Chard clarified that when a municipality protests an application, it triggers a hearing with the ABC Board, at which the City would explain its reasoning for protesting the application. He stated the ABC Board would deliberate and rule accordingly. He confirmed that nothing would compel the Board to honor the Council’s protest.

Ms. Therrien pointed out that the applicant was likely aware of F. Eagle’s concerns but did not attend the meeting. She asserted that the application did not show how the license would enhance tourism and that she had always considered Lavelle’s Bistro to be primarily for locals.

Ms. Tidwell concurred that the application did not provide any data to support the claim that the license would encourage or otherwise enhance tourism downtown.

Mr. Cleworth suggested that the issue creates a double standard and that while he knows some tourists may eat at the hotel restaurant, that is not the primary customer base. He pointed out that many guests are in-state travelers, often at the location due to its proximity to the courthouse. He stated that the loophole to allow additional licenses beyond the established limit had always bothered him, as does the fact that the ABC Board can overrule the City Council.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO PROTEST THE NEW ALCOHOL LICENSE APPLICATION WITH ENDORSEMENTS AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor O’Neill declared the MOTION CARRIED.

MAYOR’S COMMENTS AND REPORT

Mayor O’Neill announced that Timothy Zinza had been selected as the new City Engineer and congratulated him on the promotion. She shared details about the City Ambassador program which would empower volunteers to be eyes and ears in the downtown core area, speaking with business owners, directing tourists, and keeping a lookout for what happens in the streets. She added that they would be equipped with resources of who to call should a problem arise and invited anyone interested in the program to sign up on the City website.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if the Ambassador program would be spearheaded from City Hall. **Mayor O’Neill** clarified that Festival Fairbanks would run the program with the City’s support.

COUNCILMEMBERS’ COMMENTS

Mr. Ringstad expressed frustration with the continued occurrences of physical and verbal assaults across Fairbanks and suggested that an increased focus on protecting citizens was in order.

Mr. Cleworth spoke of B. Wammack’s situation, noting that the lien exceeded the value of the property. He stated that he had never known the City to waive a lien, although it has at times waived penalties and interest. He suggested that the property would likely be coming up on the foreclosure list due to unpaid property taxes. He congratulated T. Zinza on his promotion. He discussed the love/hate relationship that exists within the community over speed humps, the cost for each device, the challenges they present, and the problems with other solutions such as stop signs. **Mr. Cleworth** noted that the Council had received an email from a Shannon Park resident regarding a temporary speed hump that had shown up in their neighborhood which may or may not have been placed by the City. He asked why item 14(c), Ordinance No. 6347, had not been designated with an asterisk on the agenda. Clerk Snider explained that Mayor O’Neill had requested the item not be included on the consent agenda to ensure it would be discussed before potentially advancing to a second reading and public hearing.

Ms. Therrien proposed that the City consider accepting a transfer of ownership of the property referenced by B. Wammack in lieu of payment of the lien and interest. She congratulated the graduates of the Citizen Engagement Academy and expressed regret in missing the farewell of former City Engineer Robert Pristash.

Ms. Sprinkle congratulated T. Zinza on his promotion and welcomed Ms. Therrien back.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a) Ordinance No. 6346 – An Ordinance Authorizing the Lease of the Log Cabin Located at 550 1st Avenue to Alaska Universal Productions, Inc. Sponsored by Mayor O’Neill.
SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

Mayor O’Neill called for Public Testimony.

Nick Stepovich – N. Stepovich shared that he had owned Soapy Smith’s restaurant, located downtown, for over 30 years and that he was offering friendly opposition to the ordinance due to the proposal and request for information (RFI) not being shared with the whole community and stakeholders downtown. He asserted that numerous business owners heard about the RFI way too late and that several Councilmembers had not even been aware of what was taking place. He suggested the City fix the procedures and aim for greater transparency, fairness, and equity. N. Stepovich stated that it was unfair to tax-paying businesses to have to compete with the City as it selectively awards generous lease arrangements. He applauded the City’s desire to move forward but proposed that it would behoove everyone to do so together. He added that he has a lot of knowledge about the history of the log cabin that he would be happy to share.

Ms. Sprinkle asked N. Stepovich if he could provide a brief history of the cabin. N. Stepovich shared that it was built over 70 years ago and was intended to serve as a summer-only welcome center for visitors to stop in, grab brochures, and get the feeling of an old cabin setting. He recounted how other tenants over the years continued to serve the role, even if unofficially, of a welcome center but never year-round. He reiterated his opposition to the ordinance and support for getting more community input, adding that it is the Council’s prerogative to be more involved.

Ms. Therrien asked N. Stepovich if he or anyone he knew saw the RFI. N. Stepovich stated that he had not, that he was aware that the Executive Director of the Downtown Association of Fairbanks had shared it via email, and that it was posted on Facebook and in the newspaper. He pointed out that many people do not use those methods of communication and discussed what had transpired based on his own understanding and conversations with five different Councilmembers.

Jennifer Jolis – J. Jolis stated that she reads the newspaper daily but was out of town in March and had no knowledge of the plans for the log cabin until the last week. She shared that she was also distressed with how rapid the process unfolded. She stated she is aware of messages from the City to another interested party, the Co-Op Grocery Market & Deli, informing them that the decision had already been made for who was being offered the lease, pending Council approval. She pointed out that many elements of the Co-Op’s proposal would benefit the City, such as a commitment to assisting with year-round security in the Golden Heart Plaza. J. Jolis stated that as a co-founder of the HopeLink Warming Center she was dismayed at the prospect of another alcohol license downtown. She asserted that the RFI process did not meet the expected standard for transparency.

Christopher Hutchquist, General Manager of Co-Op Market Grocery & Deli – C. Hutchquist requested that the Council vote no on the ordinance and proceed with a request for proposals (RFP). He shared that the Mayor had invited him to consider renting the log cabin, that he toured the building, and that he had a one exploratory conversation with the Chief of Staff. He reported

that after returning with his Board of Directors' President to further review the space and speak with the current tenant, he wanted to move forward and create a proposal with the support of his Board. He recounted having inquired about next steps but did not hear much back until being told it was essentially too late. C. Hutchquist explained that when he did not receive guidance on how to submit a proposal, he created a short slide deck outlining their idea which he sent to the Mayor's Office, and 62 minutes later he received a response declining his proposal, with an explanation that the City had decided to put a restaurant in the space. He suggested that there was not much of a process but a rather quick decision. C. Hutchquist noted that while he appreciates the sense of urgency, this was a generational choice with only three tenants in the cabin's 70-year history, with the next tenant likely taking the cabin to its 100-year anniversary. He asserted that the cabin was a gem in the community and added that he believes an alcohol license in a City-owned, leased building was inappropriate and contrary to the stated goals of the Mayor and Council.

Ms. Tidwell asked C. Hutchquist to confirm that the handout had not been submitted in his original proposal. C. Hutchquist clarified that the eight-page slide deck was what he submitted on Friday, April 24 after not receiving a response to his request for guidance and next steps to move forward, and which was quickly rejected by the Chief of Staff.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if the Co-Op was a nonprofit organization and for more details on their ownership structure. C. Hutchquist stated they are community-owned with thousands of members and while they make a profit to support their mission, their model is not to maximize profit.

Jonathan Huff – J. Huff shared that he is the one being considered for the lease and that Mayor O'Neill had approached him after a recent Chamber of Commerce luncheon to discuss the project. He stated that he spoke with his wife and came back with their idea. He acknowledged the quick timeline based on a desire to not leave the space vacant for the summer season. J. Huff clarified that his business plan did not include an alcohol license, although they hoped to have occasional special events that could incorporate alcohol sales, but if a beverage dispensary license became available, they would be interested. He stated he does not believe anything was done incorrectly on his part but that he would support the Council's decision should it choose a standard RFP process. He asked that the Council consider his perspective and the time and effort already put in.

Ms. Sprinkle asked about what had been put into the project so far. J. Huff replied that it involved time to draft the proposal and research what equipment and supplies were necessary. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked if they had already made purchases related to the plans. J. Huff confirmed that they had not.

Mr. Marney asked J. Huff if he would submit a proposal if the Council did not approve the lease and decided to go with an RFP. J. Huff stated that he likely would not as it would not work with the timeline of other business plans. He shared that if they were awarded the lease, they would be open by June 15 for basic services and immediately begin work on upgrades.

David van den Berg, Executive Director of Downtown Association of Fairbanks (DTA) – D. van den Berg stated that his board of directors had not taken a position on the ordinance but affirmed that they support efforts that make downtown welcoming and inviting. He suggested that the log cabin is a catalyst property which they are glad to see receiving attention. He outlined several suggestions he believes should be incorporated into any potential lease, highlighting the challenges and opportunities associated with the property.

Ms. Therrien asked if the DTA members were aware of the RFI. D. van den Berg reported that the RFI information was included in DTA's newsletter a few times to help expand the reach.

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

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Therrien**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6346.

Mr. Cleworth asserted that there is a problem of procedure and that he is not a fan of using an RFI process as he considers the two-step approach cumbersome to a regular RFP. He stated he believes he heard the Purchasing Agent previously state that she had never done an RFI prior to 2026. He read from the RFI and noted that it was to be used "solely for planning and informational purposes" and suggested that the City went further than the stated purpose, adding that the addendum could use some clarifications. **Mr. Cleworth** indicated that he felt bad not supporting the ordinance, as he believed J. Huff did everything correctly on his part. He explained that the City that did not follow a formal procedure, nor did he recall the Council giving definitive direction about the log cabin. He confirmed that he was not aware of the RFI until after it had gone out. **Mr. Cleworth** suggested that even if a summer of tenancy is lost, the City should do things right and publish an RFP that would be open for everyone, without definitive qualifications or restrictions. He stated that he would like to hear all ideas for the future of the log cabin.

Ms. Sprinkle stated that she had similar concerns and asked if the property would lose its tax-free exemption if the City was to lease the building to a for-profit business. **Mayor O'Neall** stated that it would not. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked if any commercial business had previously occupied the building. Chief of Staff Michael Sanders affirmed that all past tenants had been nonprofit organizations. **Ms. Sprinkle** stated that she has issues with the process and pointed out that the City had used four different approaches for four different City-owned properties in the last year. She explained that she does not understand the inconsistency. She asked what level of involvement the Council would have in drafting a potential RFP and scoring criteria. She spoke of the numerous communications she had received about the cabin and how she had no answers to the questions being asked of her. **Ms. Sprinkle** expressed admiration for J. Huff and hated what a "no" vote would mean for him but recounted that the Council's strategic planning meetings emphasized a desire for "transparent, informed, consistent, and fair" decision-making processes, which this had not been.

Ms. Tidwell stated she was sad to feel she could not vote in favor of the ordinance but expressed her belief that doing something right is more important than doing it fast. She reported receiving numerous calls and emails over the past week and stated that, in such cases, even if she does not agree with the views being shared, it is Councilmembers' responsibility to consider the voices of those they were elected to represent. She recounted asking questions during a recent work session and only receiving short, vague answers. She was hopeful that the City would do better next time.

Ms. Therrien noted that she had been gone for the last work session and asked for more details on the other proposals that were submitted and rejected. M. Sanders shared that Festival Fairbanks had proposed a gift shop that would offer coffee and hot chocolate, which was similar to but not quite at the same level as J. Huff's proposal. He reported that another dog mushing organization had been interested but was not a public-facing business like the City hoped for. He acknowledged that the proposal from the Co-Op had been the best they received up to that point but that two better offers came after. M. Sanders explained that the approach was within the parameters set forth in the FGC. He asserted that if the Council wished for an RFP to be published each time it

could make that requirement, but doing so would result in an average timeline of three months. He added that there were opportunity costs to consider. **Ms. Therrien** recounted J. Huff's statement that he would be ready to open by June 15 and asked if it would be possible to lease the cabin to him for just one summer. M. Sanders stated that he does not believe that would be palatable to J. Huff, nor would it be good business practice by the City. **Ms. Therrien** asked if the process that had occurred was legal. City Attorney Chard affirmed that the process had been legal but pointed out that nothing in the FGC outlined a specific approach for the situation. He advised that if the Council's desire is to see an RFP issued in such a scenario, he would encourage an enacting ordinance. He shared that, historically, the administration would engage with businesses and organizations in the community to bring forth a proposal to the Council for approval regarding the use of a City asset. Attorney Chard stated it appears that process was followed but that it is the Council's prerogative to set a different approach if that is what is desired.

Mr. Marney shared that he had spoken with Festival Fairbanks' Executive Director a few times and was aware of her idea to sell favorite dishes from downtown businesses in the cabin as a sampling to visitors. He agreed with other statements that the process was flawed and added that he hated to lose both a summer of the cabin being open and J. Huff as an interested party.

Mayor O'Neall stated that the Council had a choice between supporting a process that was clear, transparent, and advertised or thwarting progress in downtown for 2026. She asserted that the Council had lots of discussion about what to do with the property and that the RFI process, which had been consistent since she took office, was used to request ideas from interested parties. She confirmed that after a Chamber of Commerce meeting, she spoke with both J. Huff and C. Hutchquist and asked if they would be interested. She stated they both submitted proposals the following day and that one was ultimately chosen. **Mayor O'Neall** suggested that the Council's claim to be unaware of the updates was not true, that she had provided a report in a previous meeting, and that the matter was discussed on three different occasions. She stated that her door is always open and Councilmembers are welcome to come to her with questions about process; she added that no one had done so. She expressed confusion over the contradiction to slow down the current ordinance after the Council pushed to rush the RFP process with the Polaris Building site. She acknowledged that it was the Council's prerogative to vote down the ordinance but asked for consistency as to the Council's expectations. **Mayor O'Neall** asserted that she is working tirelessly, going over and above, without resources. She pointed out that people will not see messaging from the City if they are not reading the newspaper, checking social media, or listening to her communications, and that the City is doing the best it can to get the word out. She stated she takes issue with complaints about process when she followed the FGC and was transparent every step of the way. She added that hearing claims to the contrary was disappointing. She commented that it appeared the Council would once again choose to not invest in themselves.

Ms. Sprinkle suggested that seeing the RFI in advance would have been nice and that the difference between the process given to the log cabin and the Polaris site was that the Council had the chance to be involved with the latter's RFP long before it was published. She explained that took an investment in time—not just a single opportunity to approve without any background. She pointed out that this was the first time the Council had seen the proposal for the log cabin. **Mayor O'Neall** stated that this was actually the Council's third time reviewing it. **Ms. Sprinkle** clarified that while the ordinance had been before the Council three times, they had no idea what went into the initial RFI until after it was published. **Mayor O'Neall** suggested if that was the case, the Council had not been paying attention. **Ms. Sprinkle** asserted that if the only opportunity the

Council had to weigh in on the matter was after a proposal was chosen and an ordinance was drafted for Council approval, members should not be chided for asking questions or be told that they had not been paying attention. She declared that the Council is paying attention, that a lot of people had spoken to Councilmembers about the situation, and that they are not making things up. She noted that many people are not happy with the process and that the Council was trying to do its job. She stated that she appreciates the desire to launch but reiterated the need to do things right.

Ms. Tidwell stated that she did not believe that the process was wrong and expressed appreciation for the Mayor's work on the project. She suggested that the community was less familiar with an RFI approach which was why there were few responses. She shared that she had only started hearing from unhappy business owners in the last week; otherwise, she would have had more questions in earlier meetings. She expressed distaste in a process that only involved the Council after a decision was already made, which often makes the Council look like the bad guys. She reiterated that an overwhelming number of people had reached out to her in the last week.

Ms. Therrien expressed concern over potential alcohol sales and asked if the Council could restrict that in the lease. **Mayor O'Neall** confirmed that the Council could choose to do that.

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle** moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6346 by directing that the lease state that no alcohol sales or consumption could occur on the premises.

Ms. Therrien suggested that there are enough bars in the area and that concerns over alcohol consumption and competition with other businesses convinced her that the motion was appropriate.

Mayor O'Neall called for objection on the motion to AMEND Ordinance No. 6346 by directing that the lease state that no alcohol sales or consumption could occur on the premises and hearing none, declared the motion CARRIED.

Mr. Cleworth sympathized with the Mayor's frustration and acknowledged that the Council has its own frustrations. He referenced the language of the RFI which stated: "Responses to this RFI will be used solely for planning and informational purposes." He asserted that it was not meant to be used for making a decision but rather to prepare for further processes, namely that the City would use the information gathered to "determine whether to issue a request for proposals." **Mr. Cleworth** asked who was intended to make that determination and surmised it to be the Council. He reiterated that he believes an RFI adds a needless step to an RFP and that it seemed clear that this RFI was not meant to be used to make a decision. He noted that the published addendum stated that the proposed use must include a food and beverage component, which would eliminate many potential interested parties. He restated that he had not seen the RFI before it went out nor the later addendum. He suggested that the Council's present deliberation was in fact honoring the intent of the RFI by using the gathered information and proposals for planning and informational purposes.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6346, AS AMENDED, AS FOLLOWS:

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

NEW BUSINESS

- a) Resolution No. 5212 – A Resolution Awarding a Contract to Interior Alaska Roofing, Inc. For City Hall Roof Replacement – Section B Project in the Amount of \$376,700. Sponsored by Mayor O’Neill.

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to APPROVE Resolution No. 5212.

Ms. Sprinkle asked for additional information on the multiple phases of the project. **Mayor O’Neill** invited City Engineer Timothy Zinza to provide details. T. Zinza explained that the roof replacement project was split into four phases and that the phase performed in 2025 was the largest and most expensive due to the replacement of an air handler and the relocation and reinstallation of other equipment. He affirmed that the remaining phases were smaller and would cost less.

Mr. Ringstad asked if the project had already been preapproved and budgeted for in the Capital Fund. Chief Financial Officer Margarita Bell confirmed that it had, with a \$650,000 budget.

Mr. Marney asked if it was the same contractor from phase one, and CFO Bell confirmed it was.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION NO. 5212 AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor O’Neill declared the MOTION CARRIED and Resolution No. 5212 APPROVED.

- b) Resolution No. 5213 – A Resolution in Support of the Spur Line to Fairbanks as Part of the Alaska LNG Pipeline Project. Sponsored by Mayor O’Neill.

Mayor O’Neill explained that the resolution was intended for the State Legislature, Governor, and Congressional Delegation, and, after speaking with the City’s lobbyist and legislators, had been identified as a good way to convey the City’s position. She shared that negotiations had reportedly been going well and that parties seemed confident that a spur line would be part of the first phase of the project, with the resolution specifically requesting that very thing. She noted that it also asked that the cost of the line be spread out and not put solely on Fairbanks residents.

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to APPROVE Resolution No. 5213.

Ms. Therrien, **Mr. Marney**, **Mr. Cleworth**, **Ms. Tidwell**, and **Ms. Sprinkle** each asked to be added cosponsors to the resolution.

Mr. Ringstad asked if the company building the line had commented on whether they would cover the cost, noting that they had previously indicated that they would not. **Mayor O’Neill** confirmed that the company had consistently indicated its support of the request to include the line to Fairbanks but would not cover the cost.

Mr. Cleworth stated that he supports the resolution but pulled it to discuss definitive language in Sections 2 and 3. He pointed out that two Fairbanks representatives had come out against the current legislation regarding the project and that it seems like there continued to be disagreements in Juneau about particular components. He indicated that he did not want to add any roadblocks and acknowledged that while those in Juneau will have to wrestle out the specific taxation parameters, he hoped that they would not get so far into the weeds that the sponsoring company decided to walk away. **Mr. Cleworth** discussed the wonder of large-scale projects that had come to fruition in past generations and the current challenges of similar projects getting approval at both the state and federal level. He reiterated his support for the resolution as well as his frustration at the increasing number of impediments being thrown at the liquefied natural gas (LNG) project.

Ms. Therrien shared that in a recent legislative meeting with the Alaska Municipal League (AML), they had discussed the Governor's proposal and how there was likely not enough time to complete anything before the regular session ended. She reported that there would likely be a special session called and that she and Mr. Ringstad should have opportunities to testify.

Mr. Ringstad suggested that conversations about who will bear the cost of the spur line had to recognize that the foreign countries lining up to purchase the gas ultimately would not care what the Fairbanks City Council had to say. He pointed out that while the City is trying to ensure that someone else covers the cost of the line, the Legislature was trying to figure out how much they could tax the project without scaring away the sponsor company. He asserted that it was one thing to make a request and another to make a demand, pointing out that the Council does not have horsepower to demand anything, and that he was concerned the company would walk away. **Mr. Ringstad** shared that his understanding is that the owners of the main gas line would be different than spur line owners and that talks were already underway to identify who would handle the in-state component. He acknowledged that the resolution's message is that the City wants the line but wants someone else to pay for it. He stated he can only imagine what he would think if he was an elected official in another municipality reading the resolution.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION NO. 5213 AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor O'Neall declared the MOTION CARRIED and Resolution No. 5213 APPROVED.

- c) Ordinance No. 6347 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Chapter 46, Article IV, Division 4 – Illegal Campsites. Sponsored by Mayor O'Neall.

Mayor O'Neall stated she had requested that the item not be automatically advanced on consent so that she could note any questions or comments to address at the upcoming work session.

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to ADVANCE Ordinance No. 6347.

Mr. Ringstad acknowledged that this was the first step and asked what the next step would be.

Mr. Cleworth spoke in favor of the ordinance, noting that it clarified existing language in FGC while maintaining a humane approach. He shared that he would like to gather a list of all local organizations and programs that provide services to the unhoused or similarly challenged population. Indicating that this was a first step, he pointed out that San Francisco, which had long been an example of how to not address these types of issues, supposedly had improved its policies. He reported that downtown Houston had also done well with similar challenges though he was unsure of what was done to accomplish that. **Mr. Cleworth** asked at what point the City would come up with a gameplan to ensure Fairbanks did not end up like other cities, such as Anchorage. He acknowledged that there was a fine line between aiding versus enabling and while he did not have the answers, he had spent a lot of time pondering the issue and talking with others. He reiterated support for the ordinance, efforts to gather research, and coming up with solutions.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if the ordinance tightens up existing language and if it would work in tandem with another ordinance regarding loitering that was being drafted. **Mayor O'Neall** confirmed that both were correct.

Mr. Marney stated that he would appreciate a discussion about successes and failures regarding homelessness as the Council considers the ordinance. **Mayor O'Neall** suggested that Mr. Cleworth may be able to provide historical insight on the issue. **Mr. Cleworth** admitted that he could not provide much of a report other than to acknowledge that the problem had grown over the years, with many individuals suffering from mental health challenges, with or without the presence of drugs or other substance abuse. He noted that other cities have debated whether to focus on housing or substance abuse problems, with strong feelings on both sides of the issue. He recounted that more and more people seem to believe that they can subsist on the streets of Fairbanks, even during the winter months. **Mayor O'Neall** asked if Mr. Marney was requesting a dedicated work session. **Mr. Marney** clarified that he hoped for an ongoing conversation, with updates about any efforts that may be underway, so Councilmembers have opportunities to provide input and be informed.

Mr. Ringstad admitted that he had viewed the issue more from the criminal side of things, given his personal experiences, and that he had requested more information from the police department. He acknowledged that there are overlapping issues of housing, mental health, and substance abuse and acknowledged that he does not have sufficient data. He suggested that police records would likely help focus efforts, as a one-size-fits-all approach would not work for the various groups.

Mayor O'Neall suggested that data would soon be available as the new Housing, Engagement, and Recovery Transitions (HEART) team begins its services. She concurred that data-driven decisions would be important moving forward, rather than relying on anecdotes and generalities.

Ms. Therrien suggested that the Council hold a dedicated work session on the topic after sufficient data is gathered. She spoke of the successful approaches other countries have used.

Mr. Ringstad noted that most of the work will be concerned with incidents on public land and asked how the same situations would be handled on private land. Attorney Chard explained that property owners or managers may have individuals trespassed. He discussed the different rules for private property and noted that commercial properties have additional considerations.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADVANCE ORDINANCE NO. 6347 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Therrien, Marney, Sprinkle, Ringstad, Tidwell, Cleworth
NAYS: None
Mayor O'Neall declared the MOTION CARRIED.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TO THE CITY COUNCIL

a) Chena Riverfront Commission Meeting Minutes of January 28, 2026

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

b) Clay Street Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes of March 4, 2026

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

c) Clay Street Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes of April 1, 2026

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

d) Appointment to the Fairbanks Diversity Council

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. Cleworth shared that he would miss the next work session and indicated his preference that the log cabin proceed with an RFP process, with a 30-day deadline, and that the Council discuss in a work session how to handle proposals.

Ms. Therrien praised the appointment of Alyssa Quintyne to the Fairbanks Diversity Council. She reported that the Legislative Committee would meet the coming week for potentially the last time, with more discussions planned should the Governor call a Special Session.

Ms. Sprinkle provided a report on the Economic Development Commission's recent meeting. She shared that each member had provided a list of items they would like to see addressed to create a roadmap for the committee.

Mr. Ringstad noted that it was his turn to represent the Council at the next Borough Assembly meeting and asked that any items wishing to be conveyed to be sent to him soon.

Mr. Marney shared that the Alaska Regional Development Organization (ARDOR) Committee held its first meeting, and he provided a report. He stated that he suggested that the Fairbanks Economic Development Corporation (FEDC) consider hiring someone to pursue grants. He asked if the Council could discuss the City overtime wages in the next work session. Clerk Snider noted that the item had not been publicly noticed in time for that meeting. **Mr. Marney** shared that he had received the President's Award from Explore Fairbanks for his work and passion for the Fairbanks community.

CITY CLERK'S REPORT

Clerk Snider reminded the Council that she would attend the next regular meeting remotely.

CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Attorney Chard reported that he and the Deputy City Attorney had recently attended the annual conference of the Alaska Bar Association and that during the event, a panel of Alaska Supreme Court justices led an inspiring conversation about the state of Alaska's court system. He shared that he met with Justice Pate and discussed the hope to establish a mental health court in Fairbanks, which had been spoken about for quite some time but was now gaining more traction.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to ENTER into Executive Session to discuss Finalizing Polaris Demolition Contract.

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 8:57 p.m., after which the City Council reconvened in Executive Session.

- a) Finalizing Polaris Demolition Contract [permissible under State law, including the provision at AS 44.62.310(c)(1)]

The Executive Session began at 9:05 p.m. Those present included Mayor O'Neall, Mr. Cleworth, Ms. Therrien, Ms. Tidwell, Mr. Marney, Mr. Ringstad, Ms. Sprinkle, Clerk Snider, Attorney Chard, Chief of Staff Sanders, City Engineer Zinza, and Chief Financial Officer Bell. The Executive Session concluded at 9:28 p.m.

Mr. Cleworth stated that the Council met in an Executive Session to discuss Finalizing Polaris Demolition Contract. He affirmed that no action had been taken.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor O'Neall declared the meeting adjourned at 9:29 p.m.


MINDY O'NEALL, MAYOR

ATTEST:


D. DANVUELLE SNIDER, MMC, CITY CLERK

Transcribed by: CC