FAIRBANKS DIVERSITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
MAY 12, 2026, 5:30 – 7:00 P.M.
HELD VIA ZOOM WEBINAR AND AT
FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
800 CUSHMAN STREET, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

The **Fairbanks Diversity Council** (FDC) met on the above date to conduct a Regular Meeting via Zoom Webinar and at the City Council Chambers, 800 Cushman Street, Fairbanks, Alaska. **Mayor O'Neall** served as the Chair, and the following members were in attendance:

Members Present (In Person):
Erica Dillard, Seat A
Terry Norman, Seat E
Lainey Appel, Seat G
Mary Jo Skaggs, Seat H
Herb Butler, Seat J
Lonny Marney, Councilmember
Jake Merritt, HR Director

Members Present (Zoom):
Karen Blackburn, Seat I

Members Absent:
Alyssa Quintyne, Seat B (excused)
June Rogers, Seat C
Vacant, Seat D
Dorothy Shockley, Seat F
Deirdre Hamilton, Seat K

Also Present:
D. Danyielle Snider, City Clerk

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor O'Neall called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. She read the FDC mission statement and the land acknowledgement.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Members recited the Pledge of Allegiance together.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

E. Dillard, seconded by **H. Butler**, moved to APPROVE the agenda. There being no discussion or objection, the agenda was approved.

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

a) Regular Meeting Minutes of March 10, 2026

H. Butler, seconded by **T. Norman**, moved to approve the minutes. There being no discussion or objection, the minutes were approved.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS – None

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

Mayor O'Neall welcomed new member, Lainey Appel. She shared that long-time member Juanita Webb had submitted her resignation and suggested that a resolution in her honor may be appropriate. She announced that Alyssa Quintyne had recently been appointed to the FDC but that she was unable to make it to the meeting. **Mayor O'Neall** emphasized the importance of going "back to the beginning" of the FDC and that the agenda reflects that effort. She shared her vision of next steps for the group and asked for feedback.

H. Butler expressed agreement with Mayor O'Neall's plan and suggested that it may take more than one meeting to review the Diversity Action Plan (DAP). **Mayor O'Neall** commented that there may be some homework for members between meetings.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – None

NEW BUSINESS

a) Review of FDC Original Enacting Ordinance and Current Fairbanks General Code

Clerk Snider outlined the items included in the agenda packet, including the original enacting ordinance of the FDC. At Mayor O'Neall's request, she reviewed the changes that had been made to the ordinance since that time (2014), primarily regarding FDC composition, chairperson, committees, and quorum. She pointed out that Fairbanks General Code (FGC) Section 2-234, FDC Duties; rules, and Section 2-235, Diversity action plan—guiding principles, had not changed since the FDC's inception.

H. Butler asked how the current FDC ordinance had evolved. Clerk Snider explained that after the original, enacting ordinance, a number of ordinances had been sponsored, either by previous Mayors or Councilmembers, and adopted by the City Council, which resulted in the version currently in effect. **H. Butler** questioned where ex-officio assignments are spelled out in the ordinance. Clerk Snider stated that non-voting (ex-officio) members are referenced in Section 2-231, although they are not called "ex-officio" members within the ordinance. She explained that the term "ex-officio" means, "by nature of the position" in general terms, so the three non-voting members (Mayor, Councilmember, and HR Director) serve on the FDC because of the positions they hold at the City. **H. Butler** asked whether the Clerk should be included as an ex-officio member. Clerk Snider stated that the City Clerk is only assigned to administratively support the FDC and is not a member. **H. Butler** suggested that the FDC may wish to submit a resolution with recommended changes to the City Council after its review of the FDC. **Mayor O'Neall** stated that it is important that the rules of the body reflect the body's purpose; she suggested that there may be some legitimate changes in order. Clerk Snider explained that there are two major pieces: the FDC ordinance, which the FDC may make recommendations for amendment through the Mayor to the City Council; and the DAP, which is similar to a strategic plan of the FDC, that the body reviews and makes recommendations on via resolution to the City Council. She stated that they are two separate processes that apply to two different guiding documents. She clarified that a resolution of the FDC would carry either forward to the City Council but that a resolution or ordinance of the City Council, whichever applies, would be required to make changes to either the FGC or the DAP. **H. Butler** suggested relaxing FDC rules and the DAP, stating that he feels the FDC is bound by compliance.

T. Norman expressed confusion about the FDC's purpose. She asked whether the FDC is a body of decision-makers that addresses local problems within the law. Clerk Snider stated that the role of the FDC is to serve as an advisory body to the City Council and to serve as a local forum for citizens to voice concerns, and thus make recommendations to the City Council, which has the authority to make changes. She stated that the FDC may pursue endeavors regarding public outreach and education, as stated in the FGC, and she provided some examples of what that has looked like in the past. **T. Norman** stated that she works closely with the Warming Center downtown and the need for funding there, and she commented that she has heard that the City does not claim responsibility in that regard. She indicated that she would like to hear more about that. **H. Butler** commented that his opinion of the FDC is that the group is in sort of a surveillance mode, of which the City Council is not a part of at this time. He stated that the FDC is considering the things it sees and may consider making recommendations to the City Council on the community issues it learns of. **T. Norman** asked when it may be appropriate to bring up such issues. Clerk Snider stated that any member may suggest an agenda item, which are vetted through the Chair, Mayor O'Neall. **T. Norman** requested that the next agenda include an item addressing the homeless issue, the function of the Warming Center, and what the City's responsibility is in that regard. **Mayor O'Neall** reiterated that members may request items be added to future agendas. She commented that it would be nice to hear from community members during FDC meetings.

L. Marney suggested a refresher on the Open Meetings Act (OMA) for the FDC. Clerk Snider provided a very brief overview of the OMA. **H. Butler** was grateful for the reminder. **Mayor O'Neall** stated that a review of the OMA could be added to a future agenda.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

a) Race Against Racism

Mayor O'Neall asked if anyone knew about the event planning for the Race Against Racism. Clerk Snider stated that the event is scheduled for May 30. She stated that former member J. Webb had a pulse on the event, but she would like direction from the FDC on whether to reach out to the event organizers or J. Webb. **K. Blackburn** shared that the event is normally headquartered at the J.P. Jones Community Center, and the FDC role in the past had been to help set up and pass out drinks and snacks. **L. Appel** stated that, in her research, she did not find much other than it was a 5K route. She expressed uncertainty as to the FDC's role in the event. **Mayor O'Neall** asked Clerk Snider to reach out to J. Webb to see what, if any, role the FDC is expected to play in the May 30 event and relay her response to the FDC.

b) Juneteenth

K. Blackburn shared that the FDC has hosted a table in the past and distributed information about the FDC. She stated that the event is put on by the NAACP. **Mayor O'Neall** stated that the event will occur June 20 and asked FDC members whether the FDC should participate. Members recalled that the event lasted about 6 hours in duration. The question arose as to whether the FDC had a banner or event materials. **E. Dillard** stated that the FDC did not have much to offer by way of handouts or swag, in her experience. **H. Butler** suggested that FDC members wander around events, start conversations about the FDC, and invite community members to meetings. **T. Norman** suggested having informational cards to hand out at events. **H. Butler** provided an FDC

rack card he had from past events. Clerk Snider stated that the local Juneteenth event website had not been updated for 2026. **Mayor O'Neall** suggested that it is okay for the FDC to take a moment to regroup if it was not prepared to participate in public-facing events. **E. Dillard** agreed, stating that it would be better to do that instead of presenting as disorganized and unprepared. She suggested that the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) may be a better event to present at and prepare for. **Mayor O'Neall** spoke in support of more preparation for community events, while making smaller efforts to promote the FDC in the meantime, such as inviting groups to present to the FDC. **L. Appel** spoke in support of inviting other groups to present at upcoming meetings. **Mayor O'Neall** directed the City Clerk to reach out to the NAACP to present to the FDC at the July meeting about the Juneteenth event and how the FDC may partner with them for that event and throughout the year. **T. Norman** suggested that the FDC find out how to partner with groups organizing the Midnight Sun Intertribal Powwow and WEIO. **Mayor O'Neall** mentioned that that June is Pride Month and suggested that the FDC could ask for a presentation in July. **L. Appel** stated that Fairbanks Queer Collective has many programs; she suggested reaching out to that group. **Mayor O'Neall** requested that Clerk Snider reach out to that group for a July presentation. **T. Norman** suggested other groups, such as the Trappers Association or "Save Our Domes," a group dedicated to informing residents about gold exploration in Fairbanks. **H. Butler** stated that a major concern amongst Alaska Natives is the salmon population; however, he stated that he was not sure that was relevant to diversity. **Mayor O'Neall** encouraged members to consider inviting groups that relate to diversity to future meetings. She directed the Clerk to reach out to the NAACP for a June presentation and to the Fairbanks Queer Collective for the July meeting.

c) Other Upcoming Events

T. Norman mentioned that the Midnight Sun Festival was not on the FDC calendar. She stated that she would think about other items and send any updates to Clerk Snider.

FDC MEMBERS' COMMENTS

E. Dillard suggested adding the Fairbanks Wellness Coalition as a presenter at a future meeting.

L. Appel agreed with E. Dillard's idea. She stated that as someone who has lived in Alaska for 6 years, she has seen how mental health is a relevant topic. She supported the idea of the FDC getting more organized and getting into a rhythm.

M. J. Skaggs introduced herself as a newer member to the FDC. She shared that she is excited to see the FDC talking more about outreach and visibility. She spoke to the importance of meeting the diverse communities where they are, getting information out to those communities, and how members represent the FDC to the community. She stated that there needs to be effort made in visibility and outreach and expressed a desire to ensure the community knows the FDC exists.

K. Blackburn introduced herself as the Executive Director of the Northern Hope Center (NHC). She stated that since 2019, her organization has expanded its services into more than a drop-in center, now offering 24-hour crisis stabilization services. She shared that the Center will be moving from 909 Cushman Street to 513 12th Avenue. She commented that Mayor O'Neall is working hard to put together a plan for people needing a winter warming shelter and that she is a part of the team working to that effect. She stated that the NHC will be launching new services within the

next two weeks and that it serves not only those with mental health issues but also provides other services.

T. Norman introduced herself as a downtown business owner and stated that she feels she is a part of the diverse downtown population. She stated she is thankful for downtown law enforcement and that she has worked with the Midnight Sun Intertribal Powwow organization and the Spiritual Unity of the Tribes. She expressed gratefulness to be a part of the FDC and a commitment to promote the FDC to the community and to relay concerns she hears to the FDC.

H. Butler stated he was sorry J. Rogers was not in attendance because he is sure she would have a lot to say. He gave a short talk on the Native American community nationwide. He stated that in Alaska there is movement all the time from community-to-community amongst Alaska Natives. He stated he is glad to be a part of the FDC and expressed a desire to share about his community.

J. Merritt introduced himself as the City's HR Director and stated that he enjoys the group. He welcomed all members.

Clerk Snider commented that she has been with the City of Fairbanks since 2009 and that she is always happy to communicate with FDC members and answer questions.

Mayor O'Neall stated that she helped with Mayor Eberhart's campaign, so it is neat to come full circle with the FDC. She shared that there is much City activity happening around the homelessness issue and that there will be a peer group serving as a street team with one-on-one service to meet people in the field, triage issues, and connect people with resources; she added that the funding comes from the opioid settlement. She talked about the City's emergency service patrol (ESP) program now run by Fairbanks Integrated Community Services (FICS), and she spoke to the recent changes to the program, including more focus on behavioral health. She stated that there was recently another Community Paramedic position added at the Fairbanks Fire Department (FFD). She added that the Mobile Crisis Team (MCT) still responds to calls relating to mental health issues. **Mayor O'Neall** spoke about folks' hesitancy in calling 9-1-1- when they encounter issues, and she encouraged anyone who identifies a crisis to call 9-1-1, as those dispatchers are trained to know which services to dispatch. In regard to HopeLink, she shared that the City Council appropriated $40,000 to get the organization through its April services and that the City is looking to identify where gaps are in the system. **Mayor O'Neall** stated that the City has closed Lacey Street from 1st to 2nd Avenue to host a skate park, as well as retail chalets and space for games, music, and performances throughout the summer at the Starter Block. She announced that the City has also launched an ambassador program, which entails volunteers walking around downtown, helping tourists, and securing resources as needed. She shared that the City has launched a walking challenge for employers in the downtown area, with the idea that more people on the streets and sidewalks will reduce negative activity. **Mayor O'Neall** spoke of Tanana Chiefs Conference's (TCC) basket toss training, stating that it is a 2.5 hour session; she suggested that it may be a good activity for FDC members. She announced that on May 29, there will be a Mental Health Awareness Day where the City will talk about the services it provides, along with its plan to address mental health issues—including the creation of a mental health court. She shard that she meets with the other two local mayors and Native organizations on a monthly basis, and she extended an invitation to an FDC member to attend the Alaska Native Roundtable meetings with her as a representative of the FDC.

MEETING DATES

a) Next Regular Meeting Date, June 9, 2026

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor O'Neall declared the meeting adjourned at 7:01 p.m.

Mayor O'Neall, Chair

D. Danyielle Snider, MMC, City Clerk

Transcribed by: DS