



FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, AUGUST 24, 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
 Lonny Marney, Seat E
 John Ringstad, Seat F

Absent: Crystal Tidwell, Seat D (excused)

Also Present: D. Danyielle Snider, City Clerk
 Thomas Chard, City Attorney
 Michael Sanders, Chief of Staff
 Margarita Bell, Chief Financial Officer
 Richard Sweet, Deputy Police Chief
 Andrew Coccaro, Fire Chief
 Jeremiah Cotter, Public Works Director
 Timothy Zinza, City Engineer
 Jake Merritt, Human Resources Director
 Brenda Geier, FECC Operations Manager (remotely)
 Alayna Wesselius, Records Manager
 Brenda McFarlane, Community Response Coordinator
 Shannon Lam, Executive Assistant to the Mayor
 Shane Wooley, 2026 Summer Fellow (Mayor's Office)

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

At the request of Mayor O'Neill, **Ms. Therrien** read the land acknowledgement.

INVOCATION

The invocation was given by City Clerk Danyielle Snider.

FLAG SALUTATION

At the request of Mayor O'Neill, **Mr. Marney** led the flag salutation.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS

Corey DiRutigliano – C. DiRutigliano asked the Council to not approve Resolution No. 5230 and to allow the pilot program of the Starter Block on Lacey Street to run its full course before deciding what happens next. He recounted that the street was initially closed to support the installation of

the Starter Block as well as renovations to the adjacent building, and that the mayor had subsequently announced that it would remain closed for one year to test different uses and learn from the experience. He reviewed the various activities that had occurred in the associated space over the last several months and affirmed that their goal was not to keep a street closed but to gain insight on what could potentially be implemented in other areas downtown. C. DiRutigliano asserted that streets are one of the City's most valuable and underutilizes assets and that they need to answer the question of how they can use these spaces to create more activity, safety, and value downtown, particularly in the winter months. He reiterated that the desired outcome was not a closed street but rather important insight, which would be lost if they end the experiment before it was complete. He urged the Council to vote "no" on the resolution.

Ms. Sprinkle asked for more details about the human foosball events that she had heard about. C. DiRutigliano shared details about the "Foosday Nights" taking place that month and other activities they hope to host before the start of the winter season.

Charity Gadapee, Director of Visitor and Community Engagement for Explore Fairbanks – C. Gadapee reported on various items pertaining to Explore Fairbanks, such as visitation data for the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitor Center, the work of their new Community Engagement Manager, as well as various events and programs in which they are involved. She thanked the City for reinvesting bed tax dollars into destination marketing to support the Fairbanks visitor industry.

Naomi Hutchquist – N. Hutchquist spoke against Resolution No. 5230. She thanked the organizers of the Starter Block and shared that her family had enjoyed the venue many times over the summer. She highlighted the multi-generational use of the skate park and noted the incredibly limited options for structured play spaces downtown. She stated that she was interested to see how the area could be used during winter months and affirmed that the current setup brings more activity and visitation to the downtown region.

Arlette Berry – A. Berry asked the Council to vote "no" on Resolution No. 5230. She explained that she had held a front-row seat to the creation of the Starter Block after three long years of demolition work on the former Polaris Building. She stated that it was beautiful to see community members gather as friends and family to engage in a variety of activities and events, and that she hopes the City would want to see downtown flourish in this way. A. Berry acknowledged that the Starter Block was never meant to be a long-term plan but pointed out that it was just getting started and was a breath of fresh air. She asserted that it would be discouraging to see what is lost simply for the sake of opening one block of one street.

David van den Berg, Executive Director of Downtown Association of Fairbanks (DTA) – D. van den Berg shared that the DTA Board of Directors had overwhelmingly expressed a desire to see Lacey Street open for "possibilities", which meant maintaining its current state for the coming winter. He suggested that keeping things as they are validates the effort to test what has been and could be done. He noted that while DTA has a favorable view of the creativity of the Starter Block in the interim, they also support the eventual return of the property to the City's tax rolls.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if he could share what he knew about how the project's lead organizer felt. D. van den Berg noted that Julie Jones, Executive Director of Explore Fairbanks, was in attendance and would be best suited to share her own thoughts. He stated that he understands she is in favor

of continuing to see the Starter Block flourish but was neutral about the matter of whether Lacey Street reopens or remains closed and would proceed accordingly in either scenario.

Scott Crass, Presiding Officer of Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly – S. Crass shared that the Borough Assembly had humbly recognized their defeat in the previous year's bowling match with the City Council and had commissioned a trophy to be used for continued competitions of a similar nature. He pointed out the marker for the 2025 event winner and that plenty of space was available for future events. He stated that the Assembly was open to the Council's invitation for a rematch in the form of mini-golf and suggested they do so at the recently opened Pole-in-One facility in North Pole. With the blessing of the mayor and other Councilmembers, he presented the trophy to Mr. Cleworth on their behalf.

Ms. Therrien suggested that if they are unable to do the North Pole location, they could do instead consider the mini-golf course at Alaskaland. S. Crass confirmed that this would be feasible and emphasized the need to hold the event before the weather turned too cold.

Richard Croteau – R. Croteau recounted that he had previously testified before the Council about the need to keep Second Avenue a one-way street, citing factors that impact every business in the area. He referenced photos he had provided showing messy conditions downtown where tourists are dropped off and asserted that this is typical of what they see every day. He discussed other problems in the area such as individuals consuming alcohol in public and sleeping out in open, which is the first thing tourists see when they get off the bus downtown. R. Croteau shared that the closure of Lacey Street had resulted in busses having to go through four intersections instead of two in order to drop visitors off for downtown shopping experiences. He suggested turning the retail chalets at the Starter Block around to face the center of the property.

Ms. Therrien asked for more information on the last photo he had shared. R. Croteau explained that there had been a stage placed in the center of the Starter Block but that musical performances had been held throughout the summer in the Golden Heart Plaza across the street. He suggested they remove the stage to create more open space in the middle of the Block and thus making the rotation of the retail chalets even more feasible. **Ms. Therrien** shared that she had been downtown recently and had not seen anyone sleeping out in the open. R. Croteau asserted that his photos were recent and that he had many others on his phone which he could share to highlight the problems he had referenced. He noted that because of Explore Fairbanks' efforts, they have year-round visitors and that the impression of their town is impacted by the issues he was highlighting. He advocated for year-round police presence in the downtown area.

Paige Poston – P. Poston urged the Council to reconsider opening Lacey Street for traffic. She shared having attended a recent event at the Starter Block, meeting several new people, participating in a variety of activities, and watching others of all ages do the same. She stated that her extended family had a great time and had talked about coming back. She noted that the project had been a long time coming and gave credit to J. Jones and Festival Fairbanks. P. Poston reported seeing lots of people using the venue all summer long and when it opened late last winter for ice skating and sledding. She stated that she had heard the stretch of road in question was one of the least driven streets in Fairbanks and that she had not heard any complaints about its closure in all her time downtown that year. She asserted that the Starter Block deserved a chance to run its course and that Fairbanks deserved the Starter Block.

Julie Jones, Executive Director of Festival Fairbanks – J. Jones indicated that she would discuss matters pertaining to Golden Heart Plaza (GHP) and confirmed that she was neutral on the subject of Lacey Street. She stated that she had been dealing with more and more instances of public intoxication and people sleeping in the Plaza and reported that she takes time to speak with them, asking those laying down sleeping to sit up. She shared that most are responsive but that she calls 9-1-1 whenever someone cannot or will not get up. J. Jones explained that she recently emailed the City Attorney information about a case that went all the way to the Supreme Court pertaining to camping in public parks, noting the precedent set where sleeping could constitute camping. She stated that she always makes sure to let them know they are welcome to stay in the park but that they must remain upright and conscious. J. Jones discussed recently engaging with City service providers, such as Community Response Coordinator B. McFarlane, the Crisis Now program, and the Fairbanks Police Department (FPD), in response to an unhoused woman with severe mobility issues and in need of aid. She pointed out that despite the positive responses such as this, people often return and problems persist, including significant residue from human waste. J. Jones recounted discussions with FPD and that she understands how arresting people is rarely an effective solution given the lack of follow-through from the District Attorney's Officer. She spoke of the need for conversations about Title 47 and combating the trend of people being arrested and released just days later, only to return and resume disturbing the peace. She expressed appreciation for the support from City service providers but asserted that if individuals continually violate the law, there had to be consequences.

Mr. Marney noted that they had endured a fairly rough last winter and asked how they would handle the volume of snow in GHP should it happen again. J. Jones discussed snow removal considerations at GHP and stated that they had a new plan which they were excited about and just needed to visit with the mayor and Chief of Staff to ensure they are all on the same page.

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA

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

Ms. Therrien pulled item 14(c), Resolution No. 5230, from the consent agenda.

Mr. Cleworth pulled items 14(d), Resolution No. 5231, and 14(e), Resolution No. 5232, 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 applications for renewal:

Lic.	DBA	License Type	Licensee	Address
6069	Hari Om Cuisine of India	Restaurant/ Eating Place	A Paul, LLC	1528 S. Cushman Street
5927	Hyatt Place Fairbanks	Beverage Dispensary – Tourism	Fairbanks Hospitality, LLC	400 Merhar Avenue

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 alcohol license applications for renewal.

There was no discussion.

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

REPORT FROM FAIRBANKS ALASKA NATIVE ORGANIZATIONS

a) Interior Regional Housing Authority (IRHA), Eugene Paul

Eugene Paul, CEO of IRHA – E. Paul discussed the origin, mission, and organizational structure of IRHA, as well as the Payment in Lieu of Taxes cooperating agreement they have with the City. He shared details about six key programs that IRHA provides to those in the Interior, including:

- Home Ownership Program (HOP)
- Home Ownership Program for Elderly (HOPE)
- Tribal Equity Advantage Mortgage (TEAM)
- Rehabilitation of Existing Homes
- Housing Based Assistance
- Meda Lord Senior Center

He noted that their Chief Financial Officer was also in attendance and shared information about IRHA’s acquisition of a lot close to Effie Kokrine Charter School, donated by the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation. He explained that their hope is to use the property to build around 20 duplexes for Elders to rent, with someone else living next door to look out for them. He spoke passionately about caring for Elders being one of IRHA, as well as his own, primary focuses.

Ms. Therrien asked if he could share details about IRHA’s total annual budget. E Paul shared that the previous year’s budget had been around \$21MM but that the current year was scaled back to \$15MM. He discussed their current organizational goals, such as building 17 homes within the region. **Ms. Therrien** asked how many employees they have. E. Paul stated that they have close to 60 employees, with 21 being year-round, full-time equivalent, and the rest being seasonal.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if he works with Nadine Winters [Executive Director of Fairbanks Neighborhood Housing Services]. E. Paul confirmed that he does. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked if he works with the City’s Emergency Service Patrol (ESP) or Housing, Engagement and Recovery Transitions (HEART) Services program. E. Paul stated that they had not yet but planned to do so in the near future, noting that one particular funding source had a requirement for a minimum percentage of services to those who would be served by ESP and HEART.

Mr. Cleworth asked if IRHA was autonomous or existed under another entity. E. Paul explained that they are a standalone nonprofit organization but that their Board elections occur during the Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) convention in March. He added that IRHA was initially created through TCC but split off to be its own entity. **Mr. Cleworth** asked about their primary sources of funding. E. Paul shared that the primary source was the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and discussed other channels such as grants and private funding. **Mr. Cleworth** shared that he had done a lot of business with one Leonard Savage, from E. Paul's home village of Holy Cross, Alaska, and thanked him for speaking with the Council.

Mr. Marney asked if he was aware of the need for a warming shelter in the city. E. Paul stated that he was aware of the topic from the roundtable discussions that have occurred between the leaders of the local Alaska Native organizations, as well as the three mayors, but that IRHA had not been part of the conversation about a warming shelter, at this time. He added that he believes the issue is slated for discussion at their next meeting.

MAYOR'S COMMENTS AND REPORT

Mayor O'Neill shared that the 2028 Arctic Winter Games would be held in Fairbanks. She provided a status update on progress made towards the warming shelter including grant applications submitted through the Rasmussen Foundation, the Alaska Mental Health Trust Fund, and private funding. She recounted that the City Council had allocated \$24,000 for the effort which had not yet been spent and that they have a goal to raise \$100,000 from the community. She noted that because the Northern Hope Center (NHC) had agreed to operate the center out of its existing facility, to provide overnight warming options, the City would maintain its position as a convener, bringing stakeholders together to achieve their common goal of opening by October 1. She reported that the estimated cost of operation for the six- to seven-month season would be between \$600,000 and \$700,000.

Mayor O'Neill shared that the City had experienced an unfortunate loss with the passing of long-time employee Bill Rogers from the Engineering Department. She discussed his service to the City as well as that of his wife, former Councilmember June Rogers, and asked that everyone keep the Bill's family and coworkers in mind. She reported that Chief of Staff Michael Sanders would be leaving his position with the City at the end of October.

M. Sanders expressed appreciation for the mayor accepting his resignation and confirmed that he was not leaving on any bad note. He explained that he is at a time in his life where if he is to do something different, he should do it now. He shared that there are other things he would like to try after 10 years at the City and 20 in the military. He affirmed that he would work closely with the mayor to help select a great replacement and ensure that nothing would be dropped. M. Sanders spoke of the positive work over the last few years and thanked the City Council for their role in that progress. He affirmed that he would give his all until the last day on the job and that he would not be leaving the community. **Mayor O'Neill** thanked M. Sanders for his dedication and asked if any Councilmembers had questions for her at that time.

Ms. Therrien asked if she was considering committing more funds to the warming shelter in the 2027 budget. **Mayor O'Neill** noted that the coming year's budget would be very tight and that such an allotment would be unlikely.

a) Special Reports

i) Downtown Summer Update from Shane Woolley, Just Cities Mayoral Fellowship

Mayor O’Neall recounted that she had participated in Harvard’s “Just Cities Mayoral Fellowship” earlier in the year and that the program included sending a senior student, Shane Woolley, to work with them over the summer on various programs focused on the downtown area. She invited him to provide a report on his efforts.

S. Woolley spoke of his positive experience of being welcomed into the community and outlined three areas of focus for his work that summer:

- Create a downtown land inventory database to assess how existing building and parcels are being used, record each property’s current condition, and develop a public-facing resource that could be used by elected officials, City administration, and developers, to identify valuable development opportunity and attract investment.
- Compile community design guidelines using examples of urban design principles that help lead to more vital downtowns in cities with parameters similar to Fairbanks, to highlight the potential and opportunities of what downtown Fairbanks could look like.
- Continue to build relationships between the City and the many groups that make up the community, such as local Alaska Native organizations, business owners, service providers, and individuals experiencing homelessness.

S. Woolley discussed each item in detail, sharing examples of the various tools, reports, and more. He shared having spoken directly with unhoused individuals as a way to better understand perspectives, with a goal of pursuing an alternative location to downtown where people can continue to have access to the services they regularly use while also being in a place they enjoy. He expressed appreciation for the support he had received and shared condolences over the loss of B. Rogers who, along with J. Rogers, had welcomed him from his initial arrival.

Ms. Sprinkle asked where the projects would reside and if they would have access. S. Woolley confirmed that he had discussed with the administration where they could store his work products to make them available to everyone and how the information could be maintained going forward.

Mayor O’Neall asserted that S. Woolley had been an incredible member of their team during his time at the City, thanked him for his willingness to dive into the Fairbanks community, and invited him to return anytime.

ii) H.E.A.R.T. Program Report from Brenda McFarlane

Mayor O’Neall invited Community Response Coordinator Brenda McFarlane and Anthony Mosinski, Director of Fairbanks Integrated Community Services (FICS), to discuss the Housing, Engagement, and Recovery Transitions (HEART) program.

B. McFarlane distributed a handout outlining HEART program data since its launch in May 2026 and noted that the team was funded through the Statewide Opioid Settlement grant. She shared that one of her goals was to dispel the rumor that people living on the street typically refuse services, which she knew to be untrue. She explained that there are many who want help but can be refused shelter or other services.

A. Mosinski recounted that they hear over and over about the need for mental health support and case management. He shared that FICS now had a clinician and master's-level mental health professional on staff and outlined the types of referrals they receive through law enforcement and the public reporting tool. He discussed visiting dozens of homeless encampments and seeing the growing trust between those groups and their program. He referenced the relocation and expansion of NHC, which provides crucial services and would be the home of the new overnight warming shelter. A. Mosinski described the high levels of client engagement and direct interaction that the HEART team experiences and reviewed what is working and what is not. He noted that there are only two shelters in Fairbanks, each with their own admission criteria, and that many people are getting turned away. He explained how NHC was stepping up to fill that gap and that many of their referrals are for medical or practical needs such as food or clothing. A. Mosinski spoke of recent challenges with grant cycle disruptions but noted that while other places are having to scale back programs, they were weathering the storm thanks to the City taking a leadership role to inspire support across the community. He reported meeting with Fairbanks Memorial Hospital management and acknowledged that Fairbanks is seeing real change and improvement. He provided details about a partnership with Fairbanks Neighborhood Housing Services and shared recent data for the Emergency Service Patrol.

Mayor O'Neill thanked B. McFarlane and A. Mosinski for the incredible work they and their team had performed and concurred that things seem to be gelling much better than before.

Ms. Therrien recounted that the Fairbanks Rescue Mission (FRM) requires individuals to be sober as part of their admission criteria and asked if that was a barrier for many individuals. A. Mosinski confirmed that FRM will occasionally administer a breathalyzer test as well as an 11-panel urinalysis. He discussed this and other barriers that prevent some individuals from being admitted, noting that assisted living or nursing home type settings is what is really needed for many of the elderly individuals HEART encounters. **Ms. Therrien** asked if the other shelter, the Interior Alaska Center for Non-Violent Living (IACNVL), had similar barriers. A. Mosinski explained that IACNVL performs an admission assessment to determine if there is an immediate risk of death or serious harm but that he is unaware of how those assessments are handled. He gave the example that they sometimes receive referrals from the police department for individuals who had filed domestic violence charges against someone but were still denied admission to IACNVL.

B. McFarlane noted that while their reports had primarily discussed services for adults, there were two youth-focused entities deserving recognition. She highlighted Fairbanks Youth Advocates' significant work, including a new program, Evolve, for those ages 18 to 24 and the Street Outreach Advocacy Program (SOAP) administered by the Fairbanks Native Association.

COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. Cleworth spoke fondly of Bill and June Rogers, noting their decades-long relationship. He highlighted their music involvement and stated that Bill would be missed.

Ms. Therrien shared that she had spent a lot of time shedding tears with J. Rogers recently and that she would work to get a resolution drafted honoring Bill.

Mr. Ringstad expressed frustration at learning that someone camping in Ringstad Park had been asked to vacate but ended up just moving further into the woods, within 100 yards of a school. He asked that someone look into the matter further.

Mr. Marney thanked those who had come to speak to the Council or give special reports. He acknowledged that the issue of wanting to open Lacey Street back up while also supporting the Starter Block was difficult for him. He spoke highly of J. Jones' work across the downtown area.

NEW BUSINESS

- a) Resolution No. 5228 – A Resolution Adopting City of Fairbanks Records Retention Schedule Version 2.0. Sponsored by Mayor O'Neill.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- b) Resolution No. 5229 – A Resolution Adopting the Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan as the Official Mitigation Plan of the City of Fairbanks, Pending FEMA Approval. Sponsored by Mayor O'Neill.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- c) Resolution No. 5230 – A Resolution to Reopen Lacey Street Between First Avenue and Second Avenue by September 30. Sponsored by Councilmember Cleworth.

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to APPROVE Resolution No. 5230.

Mr. Cleworth noted that they had all supported the Starter Block effort and agreed that the work of J. Jones and C. DiRutigliano had been incredible. He asserted that they had all known the experiment would come to an end sooner or later and now that they have a proposal for development, it was time to discuss next steps. He shared that he is downtown nine hours each day and speaks with lots of people, many of whom had asked when Lacey Street would open back up, to which he has had no answer. He stated that he was under the impression that the closure had been primarily to allow for renovation and repairs of the Lacey Street Theater, which never occurred. He acknowledged that the closure was also to support the Starter Block but that he never thought it would remain closed until he brought it up at the last Work Session and heard the mayor's intention to keep it as such for a full year. **Mr. Cleworth** expressed concern over emergency response access to the courthouse and other nearby locations as well as liability for some of the activities occurring in the associated space, such as the skate park components. He discussed the liability that the City has when someone falls on a damaged sidewalk as well as other instances where they do not carry liability. He shared that Anchorage has five different skate parks, each with posted signage that outlines rules and regulations, which also serves to limit the municipality's liability. He stated that he was unsure if the City had done the same for the Starter Block and that he would like more information on a court case, *Barton v. City of Valdez*, which may be relevant to his concerns over liability.

City Attorney Thomas Chard explained that the 2022 case involved a tire swing on city property which the City of Valdez was aware of based on the well-trodden path leading to the swing. He reported that someone being pushed on the swing had fallen off over a steep embankment, was

badly injured, and that the family sued on the basis that the city had not posted any warning notices for safety concerns, despite being aware of the swing's existence. He noted that while the lower court had ruled that the city was immune from responsibility in the matter, a higher court found them somewhat liable. Attorney Chard explained how the case illustrated that although they cannot stop people from suing the City of Fairbanks, there are protections they can take such as posting signage at a skate park, and that he would always advocate for mitigating risks and reducing the likelihood of litigation. He added that the court case was an eye-opening reminder of the need to be vigilant, especially since tax-paying property owners ultimately foot the bill of such lawsuits.

Mr. Cleworth reiterated that his primary concern was the mobility of emergency response vehicles but that if the Council did not vote in favor of the resolution, they needed to assume some liability for the associated activities. He clarified that he hopes nothing ever happens but recognized that things like a skate park leave room for exposure. He stated that he has other, big picture concerns about the potential closure of other sections of Lacey Street, which would inhibit travel through the downtown core and further restrict first responders.

Mr. Ringstad stated that he had understood the plan for a temporary setup of activities at the Lacey Street block while they awaited a long-term plan for development, which they now had. He expressed a concern that the Starter Block was widely viewed as a type of park yet the City of Fairbanks did not have Parks and Recreation powers like the Borough does. He acknowledged that they had contracted out management of the space to a third party but was cautious of any perception that the City was trying to circumvent state law and wondered if such was legal.

Ms. Sprinkle suggested that they could always expect the possibility of the occasional fickle lawsuit but noted that J. Jones had already had conversations with the Borough Parks and Recreation Department regarding the Starter Block and had taken out an insurance policy over the area. She stated that she appreciates the call for caution but suggested that J. Jones had indeed been careful thus far. She indicated that she supports keeping the street closed to see what kind of energy could be brought to the area over the coming winter. **Ms. Sprinkle** shared that she had not heard any complaints about the one block of Lacey Street being closed that summer and that she could walk her dog down the rest of that road during the day without seeing a single vehicle. She stated that she would not have any heartache with allowing the experiment to run its course for the winter.

Mr. Marney recounted that the primary reason for the closure was for the work being done by the theater and asked for an update on that project. M. Sanders explained that when the business had been awarded funds through the Storefront Improvement Program in 2025 but had immediately asked for an extension for completion of the work, citing their lack of access to the area due to the Polaris Building demolition taking place at the time. He shared that he had granted the extension, which he believes expires in February, and that he needed to reach out to them for a status update.

Mayor O'Neill clarified that the intention of the Starter Block and the associated closure of that section of Lacey Street had always been for a one year period, which had been communicated to the Council in writing from the onset. She explained that they wanted to collect data on how the space could be used through all seasons. She added that she had spoken with both the Fire Chief and Chief of Police who had both conveyed that they had no concerns over emergency response access to the courthouse area. She shared that the Borough had also confirmed it had no issues with the closure as far as transit system operations were concerned. She reported that there had been little to no complaints received by her office over the closure of the street.

Ms. Therrien recounted that she always sees fire trucks going down Cushman Street, never Lacey, and that access to the courthouse via First Avenue was unhindered. She noted that public input via email had been mixed regarding preferences for opening or closing the street. She stated that she also supports allowing the Starter Block to continue and would not support the resolution. She asked if there was signage posted at the skate park to warn that usage is at one's own risk? **Mayor O'Neill** confirmed that such signs are in place.

Mr. Cleworth pointed out that the City had recently paid out records amount of money for past lawsuits and settlements which should make them want to mitigate any new risks as much as possible. He stated that he never envisioned the Starter Block taking over a street as well. He refuted the claim that drivers do not use the area, noting that the parking garage exits into the intersection of Lacey Street and Third Avenue, where there are only three choices, two of which involve turning onto Lacey. He added that the most efficient route to the Cushman Street bridge was currently unavailable due to the closure and reiterated his concerns about liability to the City.

Ms. Sprinkle suggested that if there are concerns about limited navigation options downtown, the current system of one-way streets could be noted as a contributing factor.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION NO. 5230 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Cleworth

NAYS: Sprinkle, Marney, Therrien, Ringstad

ABSENT: Tidwell

Mayor O'Neill declared the MOTION FAILED and Resolution No. 5230 FAILED.

- d) Resolution No. 5231 – A Resolution Authorizing the City of Fairbanks to Apply for Funds from the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) for the FFY2026 Local Law Enforcement Grants for Enforcement of Cybercrimes Program. Sponsored by Mayor O'Neill.

Mayor O'Neill asked Chief Financial Officer Margarita Bell to provide a staff report on the associated grant. CFO Bell reported that the request from FPD was to use funds from the 3-year federal grant to purchase software which would aide in investigations. She explained that the cost of the software was over \$400,000 with an annual subscription of \$142,000.

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Mr. Cleworth**, moved to APPROVE Resolution No. 5231.

Mr. Cleworth spoke of the staggering cost of the various software that the City utilizes and pointed out the large annual renewal price. M. Sanders clarified that while the software would have ongoing costs, it would actually replace multiple existing programs that they currently pay for and thus the annual impact would be far less than \$140,000. **Mr. Cleworth** indicated that this clarification made a big difference for him.

Ms. Sprinkle expressed confusion over the title of the resolution and asked for additional details on how the software related to violence against women or cybercrimes. M. Sanders clarified that

the software pertained mostly to digital forensics work. CFO Bell added that the federal agency was in fact the OVW but that the program was for cybercrimes and was not necessarily gender specific. **Mayor O'Neill** noted that statistics indicate that the majority of cybercrime occurs against women which is why the program was run through this particular federal agency.

Mr. Ringstad indicated that the resolution seemed a little vague to him and asked if usage of the software would be limited to only cybercrimes against women. Deputy Police Chief Richard Sweet explained that while they do currently have software for digital forensics, this would allow for a system upgrade to access a broader area. He confirmed that the program seeks to address online stalking, harassment, and crimes against women but can be used for many other purposes. He added that other law enforcement agencies in the area would benefit from the software purchase as FPD is the hub for digital forensic work. He discussed the capabilities of the software, applicable constitutional limits, and how it improves access to allowable data after a warrant is issued. **Mr. Ringstad** expressed concern about the cost and asked how much the City would be committing to. M. Sanders reiterated that there would be no cost to the City for the first three years and that beyond that, the \$142,000 subscription would be effectively reduced by the elimination of existing software, currently estimated to be between \$70,000 and \$80,000. DC Sweet discussed the challenges of digital forensics and suggested that as technology continues to advance, the cost for capable software will increase and the City would have to catch up at some point regardless.

Ms. Sprinkle recounted the mention of other law enforcement entities benefiting from the software and asked if they could recover some of the cost from those they share it with. DC Sweet stated that while they could, there are many shared resources across local law enforcement agencies and gave examples of things FPD did not have but could utilize through those entities.

Mr. Cleworth asked if the Alaska State Troopers had any comparable software. DC Sweet reported that they do not, and that if the Troopers need to unlock a cell phone as part of a case, they already come to FPD to use their existing system. **Mr. Cleworth** asked if they could charge for that service. DC Sweet indicated that they could try but reiterated the many resources that the Troopers share freely which could potentially become an expense if they went that route. He noted that this was a federal grant and that the City would otherwise continue to pay for existing software.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION NO. 5231 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Cleworth, Marney, Ringstad, Sprinkle, Therrien

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Tidwell

Mayor O'Neill declared the MOTION CARRIED and Resolution No. 5231 APPROVED.

- e) Resolution No. 5232 – A Resolution Authorizing the Negotiation of Redevelopment at 123 Lacey Street. Sponsored by Mayor O'Neill.

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to APPROVE Resolution No. 5232.

Mr. Cleworth indicated that he was supportive of moving forward with the process but expressed the desire for the City Council and mayor to meet and further discuss what the Council would like to see, review parameters for the negotiations, and build consensus to avoid any second guessing

later on. He asked if they could hold an Executive Session at the next Regular Meeting to discuss the matter. Attorney Chard stated that such would be permissible provided the discussion was narrowly focused on fiscal matters pertaining to the project's negotiation. **Mr. Cleworth** confirmed that the financial piece was his primary interest.

Mayor O'Neill noted that the project would be on the agenda for their next Work Session as well and thus public discussion could also occur prior to the next Regular Meeting.

Ms. Sprinkle stated that she loved the Fairbanks Children's Museum's presentation to the Council at the start of their negotiations with the administration to secure the long-term lease for the back portion of City Hall and expressed the desire for a similar approach with this project. M. Sanders confirmed that the proposer was planning to present at the September 8 Work Session and was up against a tight deadline to apply for certain low-income tax credits, which could be impacted if the process with the Council is delayed. He clarified that the resolution was to seek Council approval to begin initial negotiations and that an Executive Session would not be a problem. **Mayor O'Neill** pointed out that the resolution also included constraints that would require further Council approval for things like any sale or transfer of property.

Mr. Ringstad asserted that this was an incredibly important negotiation and not unlike the various union labor contract negotiations they experience. He recounted that M. Sanders had, for many years, maintained a highly effective process of using Executive Sessions to keep the Council updated and receive direction for further discussions with union representatives. He suggested that this process had served them well and should be a template for how they proceed.

Ms. Sprinkle asked to confirm that approving the resolution would not stop them from discussing the project further in public settings. M. Sanders confirmed that this was correct, that the resolution would just begin the conversation and ensured that the Council was in the loop from the start.

Mr. Cleworth requested they hold an Executive Session at the Regular Meeting of September 14, 2026 to discuss the redevelopment of 123 Lacey Street. **Mayor O'Neill** confirmed the request.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION NO. 5232 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Marney, Ringstad, Cleworth, Sprinkle, Therrien

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Tidwell

Mayor O'Neill declared the MOTION CARRIED and Resolution No. 5232 APPROVED.

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. Marney stated that he was looking forward to the negotiations over 123 Lacey Street.

Mr. Cleworth thanked the Public Works Department for resolving an issue on Third Avenue.

Ms. Therrien discussed the upcoming Alaska Municipal League conference which she would be attending later that week. She asked that the City Attorney forward the legal opinion that J. Jones had mentioned earlier in the meeting regarding sleeping in public parks.

Ms. Sprinkle shared that she had been involved with recent painting at the intersection on Trainor Gate Road near Tanana Middle School and discussed the positive changes which had occurred, including a newly reduced speed limit, in an effort to enhance safety measure for children crossing the street. She reported on a similar effort being considered near the two schools on Danby Street in the Aurora subdivision. She spoke highly of S. Woolley's work over the summer and shared that through him she had a chance to see the interior of the Northward Building for the first time.

Mayor O'Neill thanked DC Sweet and other FPD personnel, as well as those from the Fairbanks Area Surface Transportation (FAST) Planning, who helped contribute to the slower, safer conditions along Trainor Gate Road.

CITY CLERK'S REPORT

Clerk Snider thanked all Department Heads for their input on the updated Records Retention Schedule that had been adopted via the consent agenda. She expressed appreciation for the work of Records Manager Alayna Wesselius in helping move the project forward. She thanked the Council for supporting the resolution and noted that this was a big step for the City.

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 for the following two items:

- a) IBEW/COF Labor Negotiations: Guidance from Council [permissible under State law, including the provision at AS 44.62.310(c)(1)]
- b) PSEA/COF Labor Negotiations: Guidance from Council [permissible under State law, including the provision at AS 44.62.310(c)(1)]

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

Mayor O'Neill called for a recess at 8:46 p.m. after which the Council reconvened in Executive Session.

The Executive Sessions began at 8:55 p.m. Those present were Mayor O'Neill; Councilmembers Cleworth, Therrien, Marney, Ringstad, and Sprinkle; Clerk Snider; Attorney Chard; Chief of Staff Sanders; CFO Bell; Human Resources Director Merritt. The session concluded at 8:25 p.m.

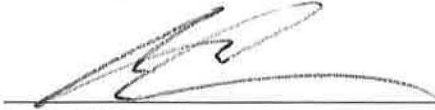
Mayor O'Neill stated the Council met in Executive Sessions for IBEW/COF Labor Negotiations: Guidance from Council and PSEA/COF Labor Negotiations: Guidance from Council. She affirmed that no action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor O'Neill declared the meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.


MINDY O'NEALL, MAYOR

ATTEST:


for D. DANYIELLE SNIDER, MMC, CITY CLERK

Transcribed by: CC