



FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, NOVEMBER 24, 2025  
FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
800 CUSHMAN STREET, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

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The City Council convened at 6:30 p.m. on the above date, following a 5:00 p.m. Work Session on 2026 City Legislative & Capital Priorities Discussion with Interior Delegation, 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  
   Jake Merritt, Human Resources Director (remotely)  
   Ron Dupee, Police Chief  
   Richard Sweet, Deputy Police Chief (remotely)  
   Andrew Coccaro, Fire Chief  
   Jeremiah Cotter, Public Works Director  
   Robert Pristash, City Engineer  
   Kristi Merideth, FECC Manager (remotely)  
   Nick Clark, Fire Battalion Chief  
   Danny Lee, Laborer Foreman  
   Josh Sheen, Labor Lead  
   Jennifer Payan, Accounting Specialist (remotely)  
   Brenda McFarlane, Crisis Now Coordinator (remotely)

### **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.]*

Rochelle Jackson, Program Director of Northern Hope Center – R. Jackson expressed support for the Community Paramedic program that operates under the Fairbanks Fire Department (FFD). She spoke highly of Community Paramedic Melody Smith and described how her interventions had helped divert individuals from unnecessary emergency room visits, ambulance utilization, and law enforcement involvement. She stated that this is the exact kind of community-based program Fairbanks needs and encouraged the Council to continue supporting the program.

**Ms. Tidwell** spoke of discussions regarding adding another community paramedic position and asked R. Jackson if she thought the current staffing level was sufficient. R. Jackson reported that they have gone from 40 clients a day to over 80, and she believes increasing the staff is critical.

**Ms. Sprinkle** asked R. Jackson for more information about her organization. R. Jackson explained that Northern Hope Center, across the street from City Hall, serves those with mental health and housing challenges. She gave a summary of the services they provide and their overall mission.

**Mr. Cleworth** asked about the Center’s funding source. R. Jackson stated that she was not privy to those details of the organization.

Victor Buberger – V. Buberger shared that it had been five years since Frank Turney had passed away and asked that people keep his memory in mind. He spoke of the slippery roads and highlighted certain roundabouts as particularly problematic areas.

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

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA**

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

**Mr. Cleworth** pulled item 12(a), Resolution No. 5193, from the consent agenda.

**Mr. Ringstad** pulled item 13(c), FDC Resolution No. 2025-01, from the consent agenda.

**Mayor O’Neill** called for objection to the APPROVAL of the agenda and the consent agenda, as amended, and, hearing none, so ORDERED.

Clerk Snider read the consent agenda, as amended, into the record.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

a) Regular Meeting Minutes of November 10, 2025

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

### **SPECIAL ORDERS**

a) The Fairbanks City Council held a public hearing and considered the following alcohol license application for renewal:

Lic.	DBA	License Type	Licensee	Address
4465	Roundup Steak House	Beverage Dispensary	Com1, LLC	2701 S. Cushman Street

**Mayor O’Neill** called for testimony.

Gene Lunney – G. Lunney shared that he manages the Roundup Steak House and that he was available if any Councilmembers had questions.

**Ms. Therrien** expressed appreciation to G. Lunney for attending, noting that many licensees do not.

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

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

**Ms. Sprinkle** discussed the changes the Council had implemented in the past year to make the review process for license renewal applications more efficient. City Attorney Thomas Chard provided additional details on the updated process, pointing out the information provided in the memo from the City Clerk. He highlighted that the Fairbanks General Code (FGC) also provides for the Mayor to add any additional context or recommendations for the Council to consider.

**Ms. Therrien** requested that the Mayor add input on each application going forward, even if just a single statement as to whether or not the Mayor recommends the Council protest the application.

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

**MAYOR’S COMMENTS AND REPORT**

**Mayor O’Neill** invited Community Paramedic Melody Smith to give a report.

M. Smith thanked the Council for the opportunity she had been given the previous year to establish the Community Paramedic program with ample leeway. She asserted that she had known what was needed in the community and had been focusing on preventative medicine, education, and helping individuals establish care with providers and available services. She highlighted the reduction in non-emergency calls to 9-1-1 and the lessened burden on first responder services.

**Ms. Tidwell** asked M. Smith how she felt about the current staffing level. M. Smith stated that the workload would be appropriate for two individuals rather than just herself. She discussed the perception of gaps in services that occur on her days off which hinder clients’ progress.

**Ms. Sprinkle** asked about her caseload. M. Smith indicated that she is at capacity for one person. She discussed the challenge of being a solo operation and how not having even a small team is unheard of in the medical field. She discussed the importance of a second set of eyes catching potential mistakes and synergy of care from complimentary skills. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked M. Smith

if she has control over her schedule. M. Smith confirmed that she does and that she appreciates the flexibility to meet clients' needs. She spoke of the importance of preventative medicine.

**Ms. Therrien** recounted that the Fire Chief had requested a new clerk position in the 2026 budget. She asked how many hours a day she spends on paperwork. M. Smith reported that she is overloaded with new patient follow-ups and has resorted to asking the clerk and others for assistance with paperwork and tasks which she recognizes are outside the scope of their work. **Ms. Therrien** asked to confirm that while she is doing paperwork she is not out doing her actual paramedic job. M. Smith confirmed this was correct and that while she understands the importance of paperwork, particularly insurance forms, she often has to prioritize urgent medical care needs.

**Mr. Marney** expressed appreciation for M. Smith's dedication and hoped she would not burn out.

### **COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS**

**Ms. Therrien** gave a land acknowledgment.

**Mr. Cleworth** discussed a letter a citizen sent to all Councilmembers regarding concern over the use of salt on the roadways. He clarified that the City does not use salt on its roads, although the State Department of Transportation (DOT) does. He concurred that salt is corrosive and that input from Public Works employees could help lead to drafting a resolution to ask the State to change.

**Mr. Marney** shared details about a food box giveaway that would occur that Wednesday.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- a) Ordinance No. 6329 – An Ordinance Ratifying a Collective Bargaining Agreement Between the City of Fairbanks and the AFL-CIO Crafts Council. Introduced by Mayor O'Neall. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

**Mayor O'Neall** called for Public Testimony.

*Lake Williams* – L. Williams stated that he is the district representative for the Operating Engineers Local 302 and had served as lead negotiator during the process. He confirmed that the Union membership had voted to approve the collective bargaining agreement (CBA) and were grateful for those involved. He discussed items added to the CBA, particularly classifications that support longevity in critical positions.

*Sean Rice* – S. Rice shared that although he had retired from Public Works in 2024 after 22 years, he had kept tabs on the CBA process and was pleasantly surprised. He stated that this CBA had often been handled last, with less consideration than others, which had not been the case this time. He spoke fondly of his time working at the City and suggested that many others feel the same.

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

**Ms. Therrien**, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6329.

**Ms. Tidwell** reminded the Council that she had a conflict of interest, given her employment by the Operating Engineers Local 302. She stated she would abstain from any discussion or vote. **Mayor O’Neill** confirmed the conflict of interest.

**Mr. Cleworth** thanked Chief of Staff Michael Sanders for the work he had put into the CBA. He spoke fondly of S. Rice as a problem solver and valuable presence at the department.

**Mr. Marney** thanked Public Works Director Jeremiah Cotter for his performance in his role.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6329 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Cleworth, Marney, Ringstad, Sprinkle, Therrien

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: Tidwell

**Mayor O’Neill** declared the MOTION PASSED and Ordinance No. 6329 ADOPTED.

- b) Ordinance No. 6330 – An Ordinance Amending the Collective Bargaining Agreement Between the City of Fairbanks and the Fairbanks Firefighters Union (FFU) IAFF Local 1324. Introduced by Mayor O’Neill. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

**Mayor O’Neill** called for Public Testimony.

*Benjamin Nance* – B. Nance shared that he serves in many capacities in the local medical field but that he was not speaking in any official capacity other than as a community physician and a graduate of the local paramedic training program offered through the University of Alaska (UA) Community Technical College (CTC). He discussed the significance of the program and the promise made to the eight current students who had begun their journey to become paramedics. He pointed out that the current situation had many of them questioning whether they would even succeed in the program after the FFU membership had voted not to approve the proposed agreement. B. Nance stated that he had never seen something like this happen and rebuked the organization for turning its backs on aspiring students. He recounted that FFU president Nick Clark had spoken to the Council at the last meeting, suggesting major concerns with the agreement. He declared that despite the claims, no written record of any issues or complaints existed from the more-than-20 years of the program. B. Nance asserted that the complaints were vague and without supporting documentation. He noted that the impact to the program would equate to a one-third reduction of Alaskan-produced paramedics. B. Nance’s allotted time expired. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked if B. Nance could be permitted to finish his comments, and **Mayor O’Neill** allowed it. B. Nance reported that he had been present in other meetings where a one-sided perspective of the negotiations and overall agreement had been shared, with important details omitted. He recounted one statement had been that the City and the Fairbanks Fire Department (FFD) did not “get enough” from the agreement and suggested that most Alaskans would disagree. He reported that the matter would be getting escalated to multiple entities as the issue was bigger than the City of Fairbanks and affected the Alaska’s ability to produce paramedics. B. Nance declared that the City and the Union will have to defend their actions and show what they each stand for. He reiterated that the eight students had seen commitments pulled midway through their training and had listened to their dreams be treated as collective bargaining chips.

**Mr. Ringstad** pointed out that the amount of money that would be committed by the City is relatively small. He asked how the program is generally funded. B. Nance was not able to answer the question, as his role with the program was not one related to funding. **Mr. Ringstad** asked B. Nance how he felt about the quality of the program. B. Nance shared that he graduated from the program and credited it, as well as the predecessors of current FFU members, for the majority of his career. He shared details about the program's structure and curriculum.

**Mr. Marney** asked if the Council's hands were tied since the FFU membership had voted down the agreement. Attorney Chard confirmed that even if the Council voted to adopt the ordinance, the lack of approval from FFU would prevent any progression of the matter. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked what options the Council would have to proceed. **Mr. Cleworth** called a point of order to note that the Council was still taking public testimony. **Mayor O'Neall** concurred and directed that the Council only ask questions of those providing public comment. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked if there was any way to salvage the situation and keep the program alive. B. Nance indicated that there was but that the clock was ticking for students to get their required hours in the field. He spoke of the bigger picture and expressed his belief that the issues can and will be worked out.

**Ms. Therrien** asked if there would be a way for parties to resolve the outstanding concerns should the Council postpone the ordinance. B. Nance clarified that he serves only in a peripheral role and could not speak on behalf of those involved with negotiations. **Ms. Therrien** asked B. Nance if he believed that some individuals in the CTC program administration had been unwilling to meet and work with the FFU negotiation team. B. Nance stated that he had gotten involved only upon hearing that his students' training was being compromised. He shared that he had heard proposals from the opposite side which could not be agreed to as they would have been contrary to accreditation requirements. He acknowledged not being privy to other discussions.

**Mr. Ringstad** asked where else the students could go to receive required field hours. B. Nance stated that other agencies had expressed willingness to accept students but explained that most did not have sufficient call volumes or the necessary paramedic preceptors to meet requirements. He stated that if the students could not be served by FFD they would have to pursue out-of-state options. He pointed out that they already have 480 hours of other out-of-state training and asking them to be away for another six weeks only puts more of a financial burden on the students.

Nick Clark, Battalion Chief at Fairbanks Fire Department (FFD) – N. Clark expressed appreciation for B. Nance's comments and attendance, noting that, to his understanding, he was the only person from the program to do so. He stated that one important missing detail is that FFU's existing contract already allows for students to ride along with FFD crews up to 24 hours each month. He added that he was unsure why that had not been taken advantage of from the start. N. Clark affirmed that FFU members and the FFD administration want to continue talks with the university and help precept paramedic students. He explained that the FFU membership felt their concerns were falling on deaf ears, so they chose to use their vote to seek a change.

**Ms. Therrien** asked if there was any possibility that things could be resolved in the near future if the Council postponed the ordinance. N. Clark suggested that conversations would already be taking place and acknowledged that the biggest challenge was the loss of time for students to get required hours as negotiations dragged on. He reiterated that he was unsure why students were not already being directed to take advantage of the existing ride along opportunity.

**Ms. Sprinkle** indicated that the situation had come as a surprise to the Council, being presented with it for the first time just one week prior. She expressed disappointment that the Council would be unable to help given the current status. N. Clark shared that some of the main issues revolved around safety, such as having too many students scheduled at a time and overcrowded ambulances. He recounted that FFU members had felt overworked for some time given staffing shortages, mandatory overtime, and increased call volumes. N. Clark repeated the sentiment that concerns had not been taken seriously, which led to the agreement being voted down. He added that in the past there had been little-to-no communication from the program and sometimes staff would show up to work to find they had paramedic students who were supposed to be precepted that day.

**Ms. Tidwell** pointed out that there was still eight months left in the program cycle and that ride longs could still happen. N. Clark clarified that students leave in the spring for an externship which takes away from the available months for the 240 hours to be completed.

**Mr. Cleworth** asked how long the program had been going. N. Clark stated that it began before his time and recounted that B. Nance had referenced participating as far back as 2005. **Mr. Cleworth** indicated that he had not heard of any problems with the program in the past. N. Clark suggested that firefighters are often accustomed to accepting less-than-ideal situations and had just been taking it in stride for years. He discussed generational changes regarding working parameters over the last 20 years and the impact of such on the views of current firefighters.

**Mr. Marney** asked if he would share FFU members' concerns to the Council in writing. N. Clark stated that he would.

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

**Ms. Therrien**, seconded by **Mr. Cleworth**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6330.

**Ms. Therrien**, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to POSTPONE Ordinance No. 6330 to the Regular Meeting of December 15, 2025.

**Ms. Therrien** suggested that a lot of communication was in order and that she was concerned for the current students. She expressed hope that the extra weeks could provide a chance for resolution.

**Mayor O'Neill** asked for clarification on the process should discussions be fruitful. Attorney Chard stated that he was unsure of FFU's specific procedures for the situation. He advised that if an agreement is reached, the ordinance could be amended accordingly.

**Ms. Tidwell** concurred that by postponing the ordinance, the Council would be sending a message that it is requesting that both sides seek a way forward, with urgency.

**Ms. Therrien** agreed postponing would create the best chance for things to be in place by 2026.

**Mr. Cleworth** pointed out that there was a fiscal note tied to the ordinance which would change with postponement. He expressed support for a prompt resolution between the parties.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO POSTPONE ORDINANCE NO. 6330 TO THE REGULAR MEETING OF DECEMBER 15, 2025 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Sprinkle, Ringstad, Cleworth, Tidwell, Marney, Therrien  
NAYS: None  
**Mayor O’Neill** declared the MOTION CARRIED.

**NEW BUSINESS**

- a) Resolution No. 5193 – A Resolution Authorizing the City of Fairbanks Fire Department (FFD) to Participate in the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms (ATF), and Explosives National Canine Division’s (NCD) Canine Program Application. Introduced by Mayor O’Neill.

**Ms. Therrien**, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to APPROVE Resolution No. 5193.

**Mr. Cleworth** spoke against the resolution, noting that the timing of the request is during the Council’s 2026 budget work and that the proposed program would commit significant funds. He spoke against departments pursuing new endeavors through an avenue such as this rather than including them in their budget requests. He asserted that he was not ready to commit \$60,000 to something new while there are all the other departments’ requests to consider.

**Mr. Ringstad** agreed with Mr. Cleworth.

**Ms. Therrien** suggested that there was money in the Capital Fund to cover the cost of retrofitting a vehicle. She expressed hope that the Council would not dismiss the idea outright.

**Mr. Cleworth** noted risks involved with K9 law enforcement units, recounting that an Alaska State Trooper K9 had once bitten someone, outside of their trained parameters, which cost the State a lot in a lawsuit. He discussed other costs associated with maintaining a K9 program which are sometimes not considered up front. He suggested that the funds may be better spent elsewhere.

**Ms. Tidwell** discussed possibilities that would allow for costs to be recouped. She expressed the belief that it was a worthwhile program and that some grant money could be available.

**Mr. Ringstad** pointed out that the Council would discuss the needs of all departments and make tough decisions over the next few weeks and that it was not the time to start a new, costly program.

**Mayor O’Neill** pointed out that the grant application had not yet been submitted and that the City could still have the option to decline the grant, if awarded.

**Mr. Marney** indicated that if he had to choose between funding a second position for the Community Paramedic program or authorizing this new K9 program, he knew how he would vote.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION NO. 5193 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Therrien, Tidwell  
NAYS: Marney, Sprinkle, Cleworth, Ringstad  
**Mayor O’Neill** declared the MOTION FAILED.

**WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TO THE CITY COUNCIL**

- a) Discretionary Fund Committee Meeting Minutes of January 8, 2025

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- b) Fairbanks Diversity Council Meeting Minutes of October 14, 2025

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- c) Fairbanks Diversity Council Resolution No. 2025-01 Recommending the Reading of a Land Acknowledgement at City Council Meetings.

**Mr. Ringstad** indicated that he had pulled the item as he was unclear on what action would have taken effect if the item had passed on the Consent Agenda. Clerk Snider explained that by accepting the item, the Council would simply be acknowledging receipt of the resolution.

**Mr. Cleworth**, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to ACCEPT Fairbanks Diversity Council Resolution No. 2025-01.

**Mayor O’Neill** called for objection to the motion to ACCEPT Fairbanks Diversity Council Resolution No. 2025-01 and, hearing none, declared the MOTION CARRIED.

- d) Reappointment to the Council Finance Committee

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

**COMMITTEE REPORTS AND COUNCILMEMBERS’ COMMENTS**

**Mr. Cleworth** reported that the Finance Committee had reviewed its three-year outlook, and grim forecasts for future years remain. He indicated that a copy of the report would be provided to the Council soon but that a primary focus was a need for static staffing in years to come. He discussed an upcoming rate hike from Golden Valley Electric Association (GVEA) which would have a significant impact on the City and residents. He expressed concern for GVEA’s overhead, citing the CEO’s half-million-dollar salary and benefits package and other high compensation for upper-level management. He noted that in the past, the Council approved resolutions to oppose similar items and suggested that if it desired to do so in this case, now would be the time to draft something.

**Ms. Therrien** thanked the FDC for its resolution to recommend the reading of a land acknowledgement at City Council meetings. She stated that she would be putting forth an ordinance on the matter for introduction on December 1. She expressed hope that something could be worked out between FFU and the CTC.

**Ms. Sprinkle** reported that the Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce had been reorganizing its various committees and drafting legislative priorities. She expressed appreciation for the Community Paramedic and for Mr. Marney’s work with the Thanksgiving the food box program.

**Mr. Marney** reported that the Discretionary Fund Committee met recently and did a preliminary review of about 30 grant applications, a few of which had been disqualified due to deficiencies. He recommended everyone attend the presentation meeting the following week and noted that awards would be announced the day after that meeting. He thanked Mayor O’Neill for attending the most recent FDC recent meeting.

**Ms. Tidwell** shared that she had attended her first meeting of the Fairbanks Area Surface Transportation (FAST) Planning Policy Board which had primarily involved discussion over the tension between the DOT and FAST Planning’s operating agreement. She reported that the issue had been dragging on for two years but was reportedly making headway.

**Mayor O’Neill** expressed disappointment that Resolution No. 5193 had failed. She suggested that comparing a Community Paramedic to a K9 program was like comparing apples to oranges. She stated that if the City wants to grow and empower departments to seek out grants for programs, the Council cannot get caught up in hypotheticals and stop a process before it even begins. She noted that the Council could opt to not proceed with the grant if the details did not work out but that the City would remain 20 years behind if it did not even apply for grant opportunities.

### **CITY CLERK’S REPORT**

Clerk Snider clarified that she had not been helping the Community Paramedic with paperwork and suggested that M. Smith may have been referring to a clerk at the Fire Department. She shared that Deputy Clerk Colt Chase would be present for the work session the following morning.

### **CITY ATTORNEY’S REPORT**

Attorney Chard indicated that he had nothing to report.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**Mr. Cleworth**, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to ENTER into an Executive Session to discuss *Chapman v. City of Fairbanks*.

**Mayor O’Neill** called for objection and, hearing none, so ORDERED.

**Mayor O’Neill** called for a brief recess at 8:15 p.m., after which the City Council reconvened in Executive Session.

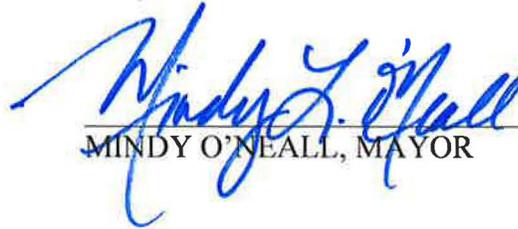
- a) *Chapman v. City of Fairbanks* [permissible under State law, including the provision at AS 44.62.310(c)(3)]

The Executive Session was entered at 8:26 p.m. Those present included: Mayor O’Neill, Mr. Cleworth, Ms. Therrien, Ms. Sprinkle, Mr. Marney, Mr. Ringstad, Ms. Tidwell, Clerk Snider, Attorney Chard, and Chief of Staff Sanders. The Executive Session ended at 8:53 p.m.

**Mr. Cleworth** stated that the Council met in an Executive Session to discuss *Chapman v. City of Fairbanks*. He affirmed that no formal action had been taken.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Mayor O'Neall** declared the meeting adjourned at 8:53 p.m.

  
MINDY O'NEALL, MAYOR

ATTEST:

  
D. DANYELLE SNIDER, MMC, CITY CLERK

Transcribed by: CC