



FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, DECEMBER 15, 2025
FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
800 CUSHMAN STREET, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

The City Council convened at 6:30 p.m. on the above date to conduct a Regular Meeting of the Fairbanks City Council via Zoom webinar and in the City Council Chambers at 800 Cushman Street, Fairbanks, Alaska, with Mayor Mindy O’Neill presiding and the following Councilmembers in attendance:

Councilmembers Present: Jerry Cleworth, Seat A
 Valerie Therrien, Seat B
 Sue Sprinkle, Seat C
 Crystal Tidwell, Seat D
 Lonny Marney, Seat E
 John Ringstad, Seat F

Absent: None

Also Present: D. Danyielle Snider, City Clerk
 Thomas Chard, City Attorney
 Michael Sanders, Chief of Staff
 Margarita Bell, Chief Financial Officer
 Andrew Coccaro, Fire Chief
 Ron Dupee, Police Chief
 Richard Sweet, Deputy Police Chief
 Nathan Werner, Police Captain
 Joseph Whitney, Police Officer
 Jeremiah Cotter, Public Works Director
 Robert Pristash, City Engineer
 Christop Falke, Building Official
 Jake Merritt, Human Resources Director (remotely)
 Kristi Merideth, FECC Manager (remotely)

INVOCATION

The invocation was given by City Clerk Danyielle Snider.

FLAG SALUTATION

At the request of Mayor O’Neill, **Ms. Therrien** led the flag salutation.

CEREMONIAL MATTERS (Proclamations, Introductions, Recognitions, Awards)

a) Fairbanks Police Department Swearing In Ceremony

Police Chief Ron Dupee introduced Officer Joseph (JR) Whitney who had recently completed the Alaska Public Safety Training Academy. Deputy Police Chief Richard Sweet gave a brief summary of Officer Whitney's experience. He welcomed him to Fairbanks Police Department (FPD) and administered the Oath of Office. Officer Whitney expressed his excitement and appreciation to be joining the department.

b) Reading of the Bill of Rights

Mayor O'Neall explained that the annual reading of the Bill of Rights at the second meeting in December was a longstanding tradition of the City Council to recognize the anniversary of its adoption to the Constitution on December 15, 1791. She invited Councilmembers and staff to take turns reading each of the 10 Amendments that comprise the Bill of Rights.

Mayor O'Neall called for a brief recess at 6:41 p.m. to enjoy light refreshments. The Council reconvened for Citizens' Comments at 6:47 p.m.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS

Mayor O'Neall called for comments and hearing none, declared Citizens' Comments closed.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA

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

Mayor O'Neall requested that items 11(c), Ordinance No. 6331, and 11(d), Ordinance No. 6332, under Unfinished Business be reordered such that item 11(d) be addressed before 11(c).

Mayor O'Neall called for objection to the request to REORDER items 11(c) and 11(d) and, hearing none, so ORDERED.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE AGENDA, AS AMENDED, AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Sprinkle, Marney, Therrien, Ringstad, Cleworth, Tidwell
NAYS: None

Mayor O'Neall declared the MOTION CARRIED.

Clerk Snider read the consent agenda into the record.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

a) Regular Meeting Minutes of November 24, 2025

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

SPECIAL ORDERS

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

Lic.	DBA	License Type	Licensee	Address
10112	Great Alaskan Bud Company	Standard Marijuana Cultivation Facility	SP&C Enterprises, LLC	1905 Livengood Avenue
10113	Great Alaskan Bud Company	Retail Marijuana Store	SP&C Enterprises, LLC	1905 Livengood Avenue
13479	North Star Fire	Standard Marijuana Cultivation Facility	North Star Fire, LLC	3780 Leasure Street, Suite 3

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

Ms. Tidwell, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to WAIVE PROTEST on the marijuana license applications for renewal.

Ms. Tidwell asked for further details on a letter included in the application packet. City Attorney Chard explained that the City had received a written complaint a few months prior regarding Shawn Coyle, one of the individuals named in the renewal applications for License Nos. 10112 and 10113. He reported that much of the letter had been redacted as it pertained to matters currently under litigation between S. Coyle and the author of the letter which was not germane to the agenda item. He confirmed that the non-redacted portions were somewhat germane to the agenda item.

Ms. Sprinkle stated that she had never seen a letter like that for any past applications and asked how concerned the Council should be about it. Attorney Chard explained that Chapter 14 of the Fairbanks General Code (FGC) outlines what factors the Council might consider when reviewing a license application, such as whether the applicant is up to date with tax payments, other necessary licenses, building safety requirements, etc. He noted that there is also some FGC language regarding the character of the licensee. He noted that while the accusations in the letter were pointed and heavy, they had not yet been adjudicated or ruled on by a neutral third party. He advised the Council to acknowledge the complaint but not consider it with the same weight as it would consider issues that had been adjudicated. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked if S. Coyle was aware that the City Council had been sent the information contained in the complaint. Attorney Chard confirmed that the same information had been sent to numerous agencies and that the individual is undoubtedly aware of what is being shared regarding the matter.

Mr. Ringstad asked if the State’s Alcohol & Marijuana Control Office (AMCO) also takes into consideration matters of character for applicants. Attorney Chard stated that many considerations are left to the discretion of local governing bodies. He added that if the court sides with the plaintiff, it will likely trigger actions which would bring the license back before the Council.

Mr. Cleworth asked about S. Coyle’s role. Attorney Chard stated that he believes the individual is the 100% owner of SP&C Enterprises, LLC. Clerk Snider confirmed that was correct. **Mr. Cleworth** noted that item 3 in the letter contained an assertion that S. Coyle was, “no longer authorized to be in the building or to cultivate marijuana or operate a retail business on this

property.” He stated that this did not make any sense. Attorney Chard reiterated that although this section of text was not redacted, the content had not been adjudicated and given the ongoing litigation he would hesitate to take any statement from one party as complete truth.

Mr. Ringstad suggested that any condition the Council places on the license renewal because of litigation would be impractical as lawsuits could go on for years. Attorney Chard confirmed that was correct and suggested they view the complaint similar to someone providing public testimony against the applicant, using uncorroborated accusations. He clarified that if the result of the lawsuit is that S. Coyle is unable to hold this type of license, then he would be required to relinquish the license or transfer it, which would require approval of the City Council.

Mr. Marney asked if S. Coyle had been notified that his licensee would be up for consideration at the meeting. Clerk Snider confirmed that he had been notified.

Ms. Sprinkle asked what would happen if the Council voted against a license. Attorney Chard explained that if the Council fails to waive protest, the City Clerk would draft a notice to AMCO stating that the City Council is protesting the license, listing the specific reasoning for doing so, and a hearing would be held at the State level to adjudicate the issue, with both sides presenting their reasoning. He confirmed that if AMCO ruled against the applicant, they would be required to transfer the license or shut down the business.

Ms. Therrien asked if any eviction proceedings had taken place regarding the establishment. Attorney Chard reported that he had searched the Alaska CourtView system and had not come across anything suggesting an eviction case involving S. Coyle or the location.

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Mr. Cleworth**, moved to DIVIDE THE QUESTION by separating License Nos. 10112 and 10113 from License No. 14379.

Mayor O’Neill called for objection to the motion to DIVIDE THE QUESTION by separating License Nos. 10112 and 10113 from License No. 13479 and, hearing none, so ORDERED.

Mayor O’Neill directed that they would continue discussion for License Nos. 10112 and 10113 and would afterward consider License No. 13479.

Mr. Cleworth asked if they would have enough time to hear from S. Coyle prior to the City’s response deadline to AMCO. Clerk Snider reported that the response deadline is January 12, 2026, the same date as the next Council meeting. **Mr. Cleworth** expressed concern that the Council may be voting to approve someone’s license, and the person may not even be able to be at the licensed premises. Attorney Chard reiterated that the information had not been corroborated.

Ms. Tidwell suggested that, given the fact the complaints were currently being litigated, she would prefer to waive protest, allow AMCO to do its own due diligence, and trust that the matter would return to the Council if a ruling affected the applicant’s legal ability to operate or hold a license.

Mr. Marney pointed out that the Council has tried for years to encourage applicants to be present at the meeting where their application is considered and that perhaps this would be a wake-up call.

Mayor O'Neall expressed concern that if the Council protests the license based on the one-sided claims in the letter, it will trigger a hearing process with AMCO to justify the action. She noted that would insert the City into a two-party dispute in which the City has no part.

Ms. Sprinkle stated that she was frustrated that S. Coyle was not present. **Mayor O'Neall** pointed out that there were a variety of reasons why an owner may not be in attendance.

Ms. Therrien spoke in favor of protesting the license. **Mayor O'Neall** asked if the Council wanted the City to put time and money into the process that would be triggered by protesting. **Mr. Cleworth** stated that the Council serves only in an advisory capacity for matters such as this and that the real time and effort to resolve the issue would fall to AMCO.

Mr. Ringstad agreed that he would prefer the State to do its due diligence rather than the City getting involved with something already being litigated. He noted that the City was not even included in the list of recipients of the letter and that the Council only had a copy because it was shared with the City Clerk by another entity.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO WAIVE PROTEST ON THE MARIJUANA LICENSE APPLICATIONS FOR RENEWAL FOR LICENSE NOS. 10112 AND 10113 AS FOLLOWS:

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

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO WAIVE PROTEST ON THE MARIJUANA LICENSE APPLICATION FOR RENEWAL FOR LICENSE NO. 13479 AS FOLLOWS:

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

b) The Fairbanks City Council held a public hearing and considered the following Hotel or Motel Endorsement Application:

Type/ID: Hotel or Motel Endorsement, App. ID 1023
Primary Lic.#: Beverage Dispensary Tourism, #5927
DBA: Hyatt Place Fairbanks
Applicant: Fairbanks Hospitality, LLC
Location: 400 Merhar Avenue, Fairbanks

Mayor O'Neall called for testimony and hearing none, declared Public Testimony closed.

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to WAIVE PROTEST on the Hotel/Motel Endorsement Application.

Ms. Sprinkle asked for more information about the endorsement. Clerk Snider explained that it is a type of endorsement available within the tourism industry allowing the licensee to offer a full bar service in banquet areas as well as sell alcohol in individual rooms.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO WAIVE PROTEST ON THE HOTEL/MOTEL ENDORSEMENT APPLICATION AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor O'Neall declared the MOTION CARRIED.

MAYOR'S COMMENTS AND REPORT

Mayor O'Neall shared that she attended the Alaska Municipal League (AML) annual conference, as had Ms. Sprinkle, Ms. Therrien, and some staff members. She discussed the networking opportunities and the various topics addressed at the conference and reported that she had been elected as the AML Vice President for 2026. She recognized City Clerk Snider for having received the prestigious "Clerk of the Year" award through the Alaska Association of Municipal Clerks (AAMC) and for having just concluded service as the organization's 2025 President. **Mayor O'Neall** shared details about the temporary pause in snow removal by the Public Works department, citing the risks of equipment failure and safety at the extreme cold temperatures. She stated that crews worked extra hours over the previous weekend in preparation of the pause and would be ready to handle the next large snowfall event. She congratulated the 2025 graduating class of new firefighters with the Fairbanks Fire Department (FFD). She reported on the annual "Shop-with-a-Cop" event for local youth, which was coordinated through FPD and Volunteers in Policing.

COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. Ringstad shared that his daughter had recently discovered an abandoned, still-smoking campfire in the wooded area in front of his home. He expressed frustration at the increasing occurrences of uninvited, sometimes hostile guests on his property and the need for frequent calls to law enforcement. He spoke of those in the community who live without any regard for the law or property owners' rights. He discussed his concern for the safety of family members and himself, adding that some of them have discussed the need to arm themselves in the future.

Mr. Cleworth pointed out that only two City employees work directly for the City Council: the City Clerk and City Attorney. He suggested that having a group of seven bosses could not be easy and congratulated Clerk Snider for the well-deserved Clerk of the Year award. He praised the work done by Public Works crews the past weekend to prepare for the break in operations.

Ms. Therrien gave a land acknowledgment. She reported that a land acknowledgement was offered at many of the workshops that occurred during the AML conference.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a) Ordinance No. 6330 – An Ordinance Amending the Collective Bargaining Agreement Between the City of Fairbanks and the Fairbanks Fire Fighters Union (FFU) IAFF Local 1324. Sponsored by Mayor O’Neill.

[Note: Ordinance No. 6330 was introduced at the regular meeting of November 24, 2025, at which time a public hearing was held and a motion to ADOPT was made and seconded. The ordinance was POSTPONED to the Regular Meeting of December 15, 2025. The motion to ADOPT remained on the floor.]

Ms. Therrien asked whether there was any possibility for a resolution to the issue. Chief of Staff Sanders recounted that the FFU membership voted against the agreement and that while there were ongoing discussions to identify how the partnership could return, the matter could not be resolved immediately. He suggested that there was no reason to further consider the ordinance.

Mr. Cleworth asked how long the City had participated in the program. M. Sanders stated that the City had been involved since the program’s inception and that the Community Technical College (CTC) needed the City in order to make it work. **Mr. Cleworth** asked for clarification on the origin of one of the ordinance’s attachments. M. Sanders reported that FFU originally brought the draft to the administration but reiterated that the membership had shortly thereafter voted down the agreement. **Mr. Cleworth** noted that the document showed “paramedic students” as being crossed out under the list eligible ride-along participants. He asked if other groups were still able to participate. M. Sanders confirmed that there are still ride-alongs—just not open to paramedic students as part of the CTC program. **Mr. Cleworth** referenced the fiscal note and asked if costs were similar in past years. M. Sanders clarified that preceptor pay for trainers overseeing students was recently added in the new labor contract and was not unlike the field training officer (FTO) pay at FPD. **Mr. Cleworth** expressed frustration that a long-time partnership had ended. M. Sanders suggested that all parties desire to see the program revived.

Mr. Ringstad noted that there was still money allocated for preceptor pay and asked what that was for if they were no longer going to participate in the partnership with the CTC. M. Sanders explained that FFD still has its own in-house paramedic trainees which require precepting, and that compensation for that work was incorporated into the most recent union contract. **Mr. Ringstad** suggested that it was silly for FFU to have drawn the line in the sand as it had.

Ms. Therrien voiced disappointment for the CTC students who were counting on the opportunity. She expressed hope that the administration could do something for the affected students.

Mr. Marney concurred with the disappointment on behalf of the students. He acknowledged that the Ordinance was essentially dead on arrival after the FFU members had voted it down.

Mayor O’Neill discussed procedural options available for a “dead” ordinance other than simply voting against adoption. No alternative motion was made.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6330 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Cleworth, Sprinkle
NAYS: Marney, Ringstad, Therrien, Tidwell
Mayor O’Neill declared the MOTION FAILED and Ordinance No. 6330 FAILED.

b) The City Council considered the following marijuana license applications for renewal:

Lic.	DBA	License Type	Licensee	Address
10958	Green Life Supply, LLC	Standard Marijuana Cultivation Facility	Green Life Supply, LLC	511 30th Avenue
11924	Green Life Supply, LLC	Retail Marijuana Store	Green Life Supply, LLC	511 30th Avenue

[Note: The applications were first considered at the regular meeting of December 1, 2025, at which time a public hearing was held and a motion to WAIVE PROTEST was made and seconded. A motion was made and seconded to AMEND the motion to waive protest, by adding a condition that the backflow preventer issue be resolved by July 30, 2026. The item was then POSTPONED to the Regular Meeting of December 15, 2025. The motion to AMEND the motion to waive protest remained on the floor.]

Mayor O’Neill called for objection to reopening the public hearing in order to hear from any interested parties that may be present and, hearing none, so ORDERED.

Dayton MacCallum – D. MacCallum stated that he represented Green Life Supply and was available to answer questions. He shared that a contractor had been at the facility earlier in the day and that they believe they can have the backflow issue resolved the following day.

Mr. Marney recounted that an industry expert had been hired by the company earlier in the year to deal with other ventilation problems. He asked if that individual was still working with them. D. MacCallum confirmed that the contractor assisted them with an odor compliance issue and that the issue was resolved, with a plan in place to prevent similar problems in the future.

Ms. Sprinkle asked D. MacCallum if he was an outside consultant. D. MacCallum stated that he is a local resident and is part of the business ownership and management. He stated that an updated contact list was available to share with the Council.

Mr. Marney extended an invitation for D. MacCallum to attend future Council meetings when the license applications are considered. D. MacCallum shared that he had only been in his position since March, was aware of the existing issues, and planned to attend future meetings.

Ms. Tidwell asked for clarification on the motion on the floor and on the appropriate procedure if the Council no longer wished to impose conditions. Clerk Snider clarified the pending motion and explained that a vote to fail the amendment would return them to the main motion to waive protest.

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

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND THE MOTION TO WAIVE PROTEST BY ADDING A CONDITION THAT THE BACKFLOW PREVENTER ISSUE BE RESOLVED BY JULY 30, 2026, AS FOLLOWS:

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

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO WAIVE PROTEST ON THE MARIJUANA LICENSE APPLICATIONS FOR RENEWAL AS FOLLOWS:

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

- d) Ordinance No. 6332 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Section 2-119(a), Order of Business, Requiring a Land Acknowledgement at Every Regular Council Meeting. Sponsored by Councilmembers Therrien and Tidwell and Mayor O’Neill. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

[Note: Item 11(d) was addressed before 11(c). See “Approval of Agenda and Consent Agenda.”]

Mayor O’Neill called for Public Testimony.

Brian Ridley – B. Ridley shared that he is from the Native Village of Eagle and has served as the Chief Chairman of Tanana Chiefs Conference for the last four years. He spoke of the strain that had existed between the City and Alaska Native community for many years and spoke in support of Ordinance No. 6332. He asserted that a land acknowledgement would help bridge the gap and would not assign blame or rewrite history. He suggested that it instead recognizes history and conveys respect for the original land stewards. B. Ridley discussed how organizations across the region, state, and country were shifting towards similar practices at the start of meetings or events. He pointed out that a land acknowledgement takes only about 20 seconds but carries great meaning and would demonstrate the City’s willingness to move forward in a positive direction.

Mr. Marney asked B. Ridley if he was aware that the Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) does not have a requirement for a land acknowledgement recitation at the beginning of its meetings. B. Ridley stated that he was not. **Mr. Marney** shared that he had just learned that the FNSB Assembly’s reading of a land acknowledgement is up to the discretion of the presiding officer and that one had not been read at their meetings for over a year. He stated that he was unsure why there has been such pressure for the City Council to adopt the practice when the FNSB, with its much

larger geographical footprint, did not adopt the practice. B. Ridley indicated that he would direct efforts towards the same goal at the Borough and that he would like to see the practice in place with both governing bodies. He shared that at a recent local military event, Alaska Native tribes were recognized on the tails of various aircraft, which meant a lot to their people.

Sharon McConnell, Executive Director of Denakkanaaga – S. McConnell explained that “Denakkanaaga” is an Athabascan word for “our people speak” and that her organization’s mission is to be the Elder voice of the people. She noted that the Denakkanaaga, with input from their Elders, drafted the original text for the proposed land acknowledgement. She expressed hope that the effort is not seen as something being forced upon the City but rather a request for recognition and respect for the original inhabitants of the area. She asserted that a land acknowledgement is not frivolous nor are they applicable in every city, borough, or county across the United States. She spoke of the unique nature of Fairbanks’ history, its blend of cultures, and the opportunity to celebrate all aspects of the community. She thanked Mr. Cleworth for meeting with her regarding Ordinance No. 6334, an ordinance that would allow Alaska Native organizations to provide reports to the Council at regular meetings. She added that while some may think that other groups may also want acknowledgement statements on their behalf as a result of Ordinance No. 6332, no other group had the same considerations as her people in regard to the history of the Interior.

Melissa Charlie, Executive Director of Fairbanks Native Association – M. Charlie spoke of the value in having been raised in a traditional lifestyle by her grandparents, learning to live off and with the land. She spoke of the importance of a land acknowledgement and about the lack of recognition of the history and culture of Native peoples within City government. She expressed hope that the ordinance would be adopted. She added that while she also supports Ordinance No. 6334, it should not be considered a substitute for a sincere land acknowledgement.

Austin Head – A. Head stated there should not be a competition between the City and Borough for who could be the least respectful; rather, it should be about leading by example.

Ted Miller – T. Miller shared that he returned to live in Fairbanks after getting out of the Army and that one contributing factor to making that choice was the rich history and sense of community. He stated that a land acknowledgement is a good opportunity to show appreciation for local culture.

Alex Valez – A. Valez thanked the Native leadership for their words and echoed their thoughts. He spoke of growing up with an Athabascan mother and the lessons he learned through their culture. He suggested that a land acknowledgement is simply a factual statement about local history and that while Native culture is often viewed as something from the past, it is in fact still very present. He asserted that the ordinance strengthens the community and is a step in the right direction.

Elizabeth Miller – E. Miller stated that the diversity of Fairbanks is its strength and that pluralism is one of the most beautiful aspects of the country. She concurred that a land acknowledgement celebrates the local diversity, and therefore strength, of the community.

Jasmine St. Pierre – J. St. Pierre shared that she is from a Dena family and that the specialness of living in Fairbanks comes with the responsibility of acknowledging those who lived here before. She suggested that a land acknowledgement does not separate but rather joins members of the

community—it is not just symbolic. She stated that it represents a commitment and that it was time for them to speak the truth and honor the past.

Dorothy Shockley – D. Shockley shared that she is a member of the Upper Koyukon Dena and that she agrees with all the previous comments shared. She concurred that a land acknowledgement serves as a simple honor to those who lived in the area for thousands of years with a respect for the land and all living beings that called it home. She pointed out that Native people welcomed the newcomers who arrived in the area over 100 years ago and that a land acknowledgement is the right way to recognize that shared history, not dissimilar to the annual Golden Days celebrations.

Randy Griffin – R. Griffin expressed appreciation for the views expressed but shared that he was against the concept of a forced land acknowledgement. He asserted that no matter how respectful, it would still be mandated, thus carrying less meaning. He stated that a land acknowledgement is about one segment of society, whereas the Pledge of Allegiance and invocation are meant for all people. He suggested that it is great to hear sincere recognition during any meeting, be it through Citizens' Comments or Councilmember Comments, but reiterated that the mandate of Ordinance No. 6332 was inappropriate. He acknowledged and praised Bennie Benson, the Alaska Native youth known for designing the Alaska flag in 1927. He spoke of the many wonderful places and events in the community that celebrate Alaska Native arts and culture and encouraged others to visit them. He expressed concern over efforts across the country to criticize colonialism through means such as forced statements like the proposed land acknowledgement.

Paul Rasmussen – P. Rasmussen stated that he was honored by the voices and presence of those who had spoken before him in support of Ordinance No. 6332. He suggested that the effort is a way to build bridges, partnerships, and public trust. He asserted that not listening to those who had voiced similar support would be a missed opportunity. He spoke of the love for Fairbanks that exists across the community. P. Rasmussen declared that a land acknowledgement is not a political stunt, does not hurt anyone, would not cost anything, nor conveyed disrespect to any other group or individual. He stated that it would lead to a safer, stronger community.

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

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6332.

Ms. Therrien thanked those who had provided testimony and explained her intent in bringing forward the ordinance. She read a list of individuals who had written to the City Council in support of a land acknowledgement. She recognized the opposing viewpoint of R. Griffin but suggested that it was a matter of respect and expressed hope that all would support the effort. She read a support statement from Interior Democrats.

Ms. Sprinkle shared that she had felt the pressure of the issue for a long time, seeking input from many voices, and wrestling with whether a land acknowledgement would be enough, if it would be performative, or if it was even worded correctly. She indicated that she was in support of the ordinance, had heard those who had spoken, and was not taking the issue lightly.

Mr. Ringstad spoke about his interactions with Alaska Native people throughout his entire life. He expressed a preference to handle matters through substantive work rather than symbolism and suggested that the ordinance would force a land acknowledgement. He asserted that the City had already made a firm recognition of the first inhabitants of the area through the land acknowledgement that hung on the wall near the entrance to Council Chambers. He stated that the Council's agenda should be for conducting City business. He stated that communications between the City and Native organizations happen whenever and wherever they are needed.

Mr. Marney read Psalm 24 from the Bible and discussed the relatively small speck of time that his existence, and that all of humans, accounts for across the history of the planet. He recounted that when the same issue was addressed in May 2025, the Council had extended an olive branch for collaboration and communication to address community challenges but nothing came from it. He concurred that more should be done to learn about each other to fix problems but suggested that the ordinance was just a bandage for a growing wound.

Ms. Tidwell asked to confirm that the Fairbanks Diversity Council (FDC) had brought forward a resolution to ask the City Council to enact a land acknowledgement as part of regular Council agendas. **Mr. Marney** confirmed that was correct. **Ms. Tidwell** thanked those who spoke, and she voiced her support for the ordinance. She added that she also appreciated the effort behind Ordinance No. 6334 but would not want to consider it a replacement for a land acknowledgement. She expressed hope that this step would lead to positive relationship building in the community.

Ms. Sprinkle indicated that her sponsorship of Ordinance No. 6334 was intended to be in addition to the land acknowledgement. She stated that she hears the concerns of Mr. Ringstad and Mr. Marney but wondered what would be wrong with trying something new.

Mr. Cleworth stated that while he had heard about the strain between the City of Fairbanks and the Alaska Native community for most of his life, he could recall a great deal of good that had occurred over the decades. He recounted meeting with representatives from multiple organizations when he was Mayor and working to honor requests such as discontinuing sweeps in the downtown area and creating a dedicated position at FPD to work on cold cases, which saw much-welcomed success. **Mr. Cleworth** spoke of a City resolution that helped Federal representatives pressure the U.S. Mint to agree to circulate special coins bearing the image of Elizabeth Peratrovich, a Tlingit activist who championed equality on behalf of Alaska Natives. He explained that was done to ensure that the coins would be available in the community as a matter of pride and a way to raise awareness of E. Peratrovich's story. He expressed disappointment that no one voiced support for that effort at the time. **Mr. Cleworth** pointed out that a land acknowledgement had been recited at every meeting for the last year by Ms. Therrien and that if she was unable to do so and asked him to, he would be happily oblige. He noted that codifying the practice through an ordinance made it feel forced, recognizing that mandates often elicit a defensive response from him. He expressed hope that there would be supportive testimony in January for Ordinance No. 6334. He suggested that the relationship between the City and the Alaska Native community had improved greatly over the 34 years he had been involved with the Council. He asserted that he did not have a problem with the land acknowledgement language but noted that some do. He referenced a newspaper article published when the Council last considered a land acknowledgement ordinance where the author spoke of the ancient inhabitants of the region who preceded those typically spoken of as

part of the Alaska Native heritage. **Mr. Cleworth** shared that a land acknowledgement had been posted in all Palmer, Alaska schools and cited the opposition from one Andrew Shane, a Native leader in the region who also served on the school board. He read an excerpt from an article regarding A. Shane's comments at a June 2025 school board meeting, as follows:

"Such statements feel like continuing to try to tear open an old wound. I am a proud Unangax. My father was born and raised on the Pribilof Islands. From the first time I heard a land acknowledgment, I remember thinking to myself, 'What is the point of this? How does this help anyone? Should non-Alaska Natives feel guilty for being here? Should Alaska Natives feel shame for losing control of the land to the Russians, who later sold it to the U.S.?' As a community leader, I want to encourage our school district to encourage unity, not division. These kinds of statements, especially in a K12 education system, intentional or not, seek to bring guilt to those not responsible for past transgressions and a victim mentality to those who were not even born during such time. My hope is that all members of our community recognize that they are caretakers of the beautiful Mat-Su Valley we inhabit. While I believe knowing where you come from and celebrating cultures are important, it should never seek to divide us as a society."

Mr. Cleworth reported that in Palmer, they rewrote the statement, making it lengthier and more inclusive, and took down posted statements in buildings. He recounted that all Councilmembers had unanimously supported the land acknowledgement on the wall outside Council Chambers. He referenced the reading of the Bill of Rights and noted that the late Frank Turney had advocated for codification of such a practice at every Council meeting. He discussed the significance and story behind the many items hanging on the walls within and outside of the room and reiterated that the recitation of a land acknowledgement should not be mandated by Code.

Ms. Therrien expressed appreciation for the Fairbanks Diversity Council's resolution urging the Council to read a land acknowledgement as a regular part of Council meetings and pointed out that Denakkanaaga leaders had approved the proposed language.

Mayor O'Neill shared that when she considers the issue of a land acknowledgement, she reflects on what it means to acknowledge a culture that existed long before any of them. She stated that while it is understandable to feel uncomfortable with codifying something outside of one's own cultural experience, the proposed language had been created to show respect for the culture everyone participates in now, which is the land of Fairbanks. She noted that what is not being discussed are the problems of the community, which some believe should be on the Alaska Native community to bear. She stated that the problems are really for the community as a whole to tackle. She suggested that any discomfort one may feel is a reflection of one's own need to grow in understanding of the community. She asserted that adopting the ordinance was the right thing to do and was an example of showing that government exists for everyone. She concurred that there was a difference between a land acknowledgement and an invitation for reports, as proposed with Ordinance No. 6334, and that both were important. She expressed hope that the public testimony from the evening would weigh upon the vote of each Councilmember.

Mr. Cleworth clarified that Ordinance No. 6334 would create an opportunity for regular, open dialogue, not limited to three minutes. He suggested that approach had been missing for a long time. **Mayor O’Neill** indicated that she looked forward to discussing the ordinance.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6332 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Tidwell, Therrien, Sprinkle, O’Neill
NAYS: Marney, Cleworth, Ringstad
Mayor O’Neill declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6332 ADOPTED.

Mayor O’Neill called for a 15-minute recess at 8:34 p.m. The Council reconvened at 8:49 p.m.

- c) Ordinance No. 6331 – An Ordinance Adopting the 2026 Operating and Capital Budgets. Sponsored by Mayor O’Neill. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

Mayor O’Neill called for Public Testimony.

Tulugak Fleagle – T. Fleagle shared that he is a case manager with Fairbanks Integrated Community Services (FICS), the City’s Emergency Service Patrol (ESP) contractor, and that he works closely with Community Paramedic (CP) Melody Smith. He spoke in support of M. Smith’s work and the wraparound services she provides to individuals, many of whom he interacts with. He asserted that additional funding for her program would have positive results for the community.

Skye Cook – S. Cook shared that she supervises and trains ESP staff and had previously worked in community outreach with both housed and unhoused people, specializing in stabilization of those struggling with complex issues involving substance abuse and/or mental health. She stated that she had done much of that work alone, which was incredibly difficult, and explained that when her company bid on the ESP contract, she did so with the intent of always having at least two people working at the same time. She declared that the City’s CP program was excellent but that it would not be sustainable as a solo operation.

Ms. Sprinkle noted that previous discussions implied that a potential second CP would augment the program, allowing for additional coverage through staffing on more days and hours than the current program. She asked if this was still the case or if those involved were now wanting to see two paramedics working together. S. Cook clarified that the intent was still to expand coverage but that some overlap would naturally occur for case conferencing and coordination of services.

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

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6331.

Mayor O’Neill asked the Council to approach its discussion by reviewing Attachment A – 2026 General Fund Supplemental Budget Requests, going through each department to explain her original proposals. She suggested that amendments for each category be made along the way.

Mayor O’Neill reviewed the supplemental requests for the Mayor’s Department and explained her reasoning behind the proposals for a Community Response Coordinator, a Public Information Officer, a Temporary Administrative Assistant, and community promotions funding.

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6331 by adding \$68,650 to the Mayor’s Department for a Community Response Coordinator.

Mr. Cleworth recounted that Chief of Staff Sanders had expressed confidence in the likelihood of receiving grant funding for a particular position and asked if that was still true. M. Sanders confirmed that it was the Community Response Coordinator position and that the grant was as sure as it could be. He explained the funding arrangements from the Alaska Mental Health Trust and how the current Crisis Now Coordinator would transition into the new role.

Mr. Ringstad asked for and received from M. Sanders further details regarding the proposal.

Mr. Cleworth stated that he had not been expecting to go through the budget in the suggested manner. He pointed out that the existing proposal includes a \$1MM reserve and that every added position or line item would reduce that surplus. He indicated that he was very nervous and would not vote for anything that would bring the reserve under \$1MM unless there was a funding source.

Mr. Ringstad suggested that going department-by-department could be a challenging approach. He concurred that the Council should be concerned about a dwindling surplus and that there may be decisions he could change his mind on after the impact of other amendments.

Mr. Marney shared that he had tried all afternoon to see how the Council could include as many requests as possible within the budget. **Mr. Ringstad** stated that if the Council wants to add to one area it should come from another.

Ms. Sprinkle pointed out that the nine firefighter positions added in 2025 should have an overtime-reducing effect and expressed hope that mid-year budget amendments would be lesser in 2026.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6331 BY ADDING \$68,650 TO THE MAYOR’S DEPARTMENT FOR A COMMUNITY RESPONSE COORDINATOR AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Sprinkle, Marney, Tidwell, Therrien

NAYS: Cleworth, Ringstad

Mayor O’Neill declared the MOTION CARRIED.

Ms. Therrien moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6331, as Amended, by adding \$27,570 to the Mayor’s Department for an Administrative Assistant. The motion died for lack of a second.

Mayor O’Neill clarified that while they would go through each department’s budget, no department would be considered closed so that the Council could go back and make additional amendments, as desired. She noted that the next three departments had no supplemental requests.

Mr. Ringstad asked for additional details on the training budget request for the Legal Department. City Attorney Chard explained that the funds were to allow the new Deputy City Attorney training opportunities and for attendance at the annual Alaska Bar Association meeting. **Mr. Ringstad** asked how rewards points for airline mileage were used at the City. **Mayor O'Neall** stated that airline miles are used to purchase tickets before any cash is spent. M. Sanders confirmed that it had been a longstanding policy to use miles before cash. He explained that Alaska Airlines' rewards system had undergone a significant change in the last year causing the City to be unable to use miles for a time. He added that while there had been instances in the past when very few miles were available, the City currently has a high balance. **Mayor O'Neall** noted that since budgets for travel often include the full cost for airfare, the use of rewards points typically results in lower actual training costs.

Ms. Sprinkle suggested that it was frustrating that "training" budgets also included travel costs.

Ms. Therrien gave additional insight, from personal experience, about the necessity of continued education, along with the associated costs, for those in the legal profession.

Ms. Therrien asked for details on Information Technology (IT) Department requests. **Mayor O'Neall** explained that a new software had been initially requested but that an IT Director is a much higher priority.

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6331, as Amended, by adding \$100,000 to the IT Department for an IT Director.

Ms. Therrien spoke in favor of creating adding an IT Director position. **Mayor O'Neall** added her justification for the new position and urged the Council to take the request seriously. **Ms. Therrien** asked if they could fund the position by taking the money out of another area of the IT budget. M. Sanders suggested that doing so would be very unwise and shared how difficult it already is to meet IT equipment needs for the entire year across the City.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if it would be feasible to budget for either a part-time IT Director or one that would start mid-year. M. Sanders stated that anything would be better than nothing.

Mr. Marney indicated that he also was struggling with reserve of less than \$1MM but recognized that the Council may need to dip slightly into that. He suggested that they first make a clear plan for IT matters for the following year rather than rush into something.

Ms. Tidwell stated that she did not believe \$100,000 would be sufficient for an IT Director and that while this was one of her top priorities, she would rather approach it with a firmer plan.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6331, AS AMENDED, BY ADDING \$100,000 TO THE IT DEPARTMENT FOR AN IT DIRECTOR AS FOLLOWS:

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

Mr. Cleworth stated that the proposed inventory management software would be a valuable tool and worthy of reconsideration later in the year if the City was in a good budgetary position.

Mayor O'Neall reviewed the request to add \$5,000 in contingency funds for the general account.

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6331, as Amended, by adding \$5,000 to the contingency fund under the General Account.

Mr. Marney asked what the balance was for this line item in the current year's budget. Chief Financial Officer Margarita Bell reported that approximately \$2,100 remained from the initial 2025 budgeted amount of \$20,000.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6331, AS AMENDED, BY ADDING \$5,000 TO THE CONTINGENCY FUND UNDER THE GENERAL ACCOUNT AS FOLLOWS:

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

Mayor O'Neall reviewed the various supplemental budget requests for the FPD.

Mr. Ringstad recounted the explanation from Chief Dupee in support of additional training funds.

Ms. Therrien spoke in favor of the proposed partnership with the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) to review cold cases, which would be funded under the line item for investigative expenses.

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6331, as Amended, by adding \$35,000 to FPD for investigative expenses.

Ms. Sprinkle asked for clarification on what the money would be used for. **Mayor O'Neall** explained that the funds would cover any lab work costs on cold cases, such as DNA testing.

Ms. Tidwell shared that she had communicated with UAF regarding the potential partnership and expressed her belief that it was well worth the value, noting that the expense would be a fraction of what it would cost the City to hire a single new employee for the same work.

Chief Dupee gave additional details on how the partnership would work. **Mr. Marney** asked if there was any grant money associated with the plan. Chief Dupee stated that there currently was none but that they would be keeping an eye out for grant opportunities.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if there would be no cost if the UAF program did not find any evidence needing to be tested. Chief Dupee confirmed that was correct.

Ms. Therrien compared the proposed amount to the same line item in the 2025 budget.

Mr. Cleworth asked Chief Dupee which of the supplemental requests was a higher priority. Chief Dupee stated that the training request would take priority as it related to costs for new officers.

Ms. Tidwell referenced the line item for medical and evidence, noting the actual costs for the last two years were lower than budgeted, and suggested a reduction to cover the UAF partnership cost.

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Ms. Therrien**, moved to AMEND the amendment by reducing the amount for investigative expenses from \$35,000 to \$25,000 and funding the request by reducing the amount for medical and evidence from \$100,000 to \$75,000.

Mr. Cleworth expressed concern with reducing the medical and evidence line by such a large margin. **Ms. Sprinkle** indicated that she was flexible but wanted to give the program a chance.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND THE AMENDMENT BY REDUCING THE AMOUNT FOR INVESTIGATIVE EXPENSES FROM \$35,000 TO \$25,000 AND FUNDING THE REQUEST BY REDUCING THE AMOUNT FOR MEDICAL AND EVIDENCE FROM \$100,000 TO \$75,000 AS FOLLOWS:

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

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6331, AS AMENDED, BY ADDING \$25,000 TO FPD FOR INVESTIGATIVE EXPENSES AND FUNDING THE REQUEST BY REDUCING THE AMOUNT FOR MEDICAL AND EVIDENCE FROM \$100,000 TO \$75,000 AS FOLLOWS:

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

Mr. Cleworth asked for a summary on the net effect of the amendment. CFO Bell explained that \$25,000 had been taken from medical and evidence and added to investigative expenses, with zero change to the bottom line of the budget.

Mr. Marney asked if any budget amendment later in 2026 were to include a request to increase either of the affected line items, that a note recounting the change that had just occurred be included. CFO Bell noted Mr. Marney’s request.

Mayor O’Neill reviewed a request for an additional \$6,000 for supervisor training under the Fairbanks Emergency Communication Center’s (FECC) budget.

Ms. Therrien moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6331, as Amended, by adding \$6,000 to FECC for Training. The motion died for lack of second.

Mr. Cleworth noted that there is an existing general training fund of \$125,000, which all City departments could use. He pointed out that the fund does not often get used. M. Sanders explained that the account Mr. Cleworth referenced was established with the stipulation that it was only for overlap situations when a new employee starts working before their predecessor leaves, to allow for training. **Mr. Cleworth** confirmed that he supported the approach of overlapped staffing for the purpose of training but stated that he believed the funds had been and could be used for other training purposes. He asked if there was a policy stating the stipulation. M. Sanders recounted that he and CFO Bell had proposed the idea a couple years ago specifically for FECC needs and that Mr. Cleworth had proposed a modification to make the funds available for other departments, but still only for the purpose of overlap training. **Mr. Cleworth** asserted that the parameters for the account should be changed. CFO Bell confirmed that the original proposal for the account was for FECC needs but that the Council had voted to have it moved to make the funds available for other departments, with the stipulation M. Sanders had outlined. **Mr. Cleworth** acknowledged that, if needed, the Council could make an adjustment in a future budget amendment.

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6331, as Amended, by adding \$144,600 to the Fire Department for a Community Paramedic.

Mr. Cleworth shared that his primary concern with the narrative of the new Community Paramedic (CP) program are the claims that it had saved the City over \$700,000 through a reduction in ambulance calls, yet there was no willingness to make comparable budget cuts in the department. He pointed out that the claims about savings are inaccurate as the City still pays to staff the ambulance crews the exact same way it had before, whether calls are being dispatched or not. He acknowledged the success of the program but noted that nine other positions were added to FFD at the same time as the CP. He suggested that if the Council feels that a second CP is worth the cost, it should be paid for through a reduction of one of the other recently added firefighter positions, even if it had to be done through attrition. **Mr. Cleworth** reported that from 2023 to 2026, the Public Works Department had grown by 16% and FPD by 15%, while FFD had grown by 32%. He admitted favoring Public Works but suggested that if the Council wants to add another CP it should do so by rearranging human resources within the department. He discussed the number of paramedics and Advanced Emergency Medical Technicians (AEMTs) at FFD and noted the great depth that existed there. He asserted that it was disingenuous to claim that the current, solo CP was in such dire need of help when help was already available within the department.

Mr. Ringstad recounted that he had been a strong advocate for creating the CP program a year prior and acknowledged its success. He discussed how the City worked hard to return a managerial control to the Fire Chief and stated that he should be able to arrange resources accordingly to fill department. He noted that the Council already reduced the \$1MM surplus to less than \$800,000.

Ms. Sprinkle asked for and received confirmation that the CP is a FFU position. She acknowledged that meant that the Fire Chief has less flexibility with the position.

Mr. Marney stated that when he listened to CP Melody Smith testify at the last meeting, he felt a great sense of need to support the program. He acknowledged concerns regarding the shrinking budget surplus but indicated that he was in favor of adding a second CP.

Ms. Tidwell stated that of all the supplemental requests, she believed this was the most important. She spoke of the surprising, fast success of the program and the immense personal sacrifices M. Smith had been making to ensure clients were being served to the best of her ability.

Mr. Ringstad pointed out that a year prior, before the CP program was created, CP calls were being handled by FFD staff. He asked why FFD could not be used to fill the gaps when M. Smith is off work or needed additional support. Fire Chief Cocco stated that while the Council could indeed direct the department to get involved with the program, the type of paramedic work done by M. Smith is more clinical, focusing on long-term care needs, whereas regular paramedics are trained for emergency care and trauma response. He suggested that individuals whose paramedic training exists for first-responder needs would have significant dissatisfaction with being forced into a clinical CP role and ultimately leave the department. **Mr. Ringstad** clarified that he was asking if the overflow calls on M. Smith's days off could be handled the way they had been in the past. Chief Cocco asserted that FFD crews had not really "handled" those calls, given that emergency responses to non-emergency calls created a circular effect they were trying to break. **Mr. Ringstad** asked Chief Cocco if there was anywhere the FFD could shift funding to support another CP. Chief Cocco stated that FFD's primary mission is to respond to emergencies and that cutting elsewhere would have a negative outcome within the department, the local healthcare system, and the community. He suggested that a stronger CP program would fill current gaps and give greater opportunities to approach partners to pursue alternative funding sources in the future.

Ms. Therrien asked if Chief Cocco could provide an update on discussions with the hospital about providing financial support for the CP program. Chief Cocco reported that there was great interest and support for the program within the local healthcare system but that it is still viewed as a pilot program. He reiterated that the current approach is not sustainable and that the single CP is beyond her capacity, a situation which is evident to others who are reviewing the program. He confirmed that strengthening the program will increase the likelihood of outside financial support.

Mr. Cleworth noted that the CP program shifts focus from emergency to social services, which could be an endless road. He discussed call volumes and reiterated that if the CP needs support, it already exists among FFD personnel. He noted that there are three ambulances and that it is rare for all three to be in use at the same time. Chief Cocco explained that the gap is in long-term medical needs and continuity of care, which is not feasible with rotating ambulance crews. **Mr. Cleworth** suggested that a larger discussion would be prudent regarding whether the Council really wants long-term care to become a larger piece of the total mission at FFD.

Mayor O'Neill asked how many FFD employees have a job classification that is solely a "paramedic." Chief Cocco described the cross-training and certification that exists within the department and stated that M. Smith is the only person who was hired solely as a paramedic. **Mayor O'Neill** asked why other job titles did not include the term "paramedic" if such training was a requirement. Chief Cocco outlined the differentiation between the various positions' areas of focus and how they are classified, noting that some parameters are in place simply because they

had been that way for years. He confirmed that the work of firefighters and community paramedics are completely distinct in nature, referencing that comparison as “apples and potatoes.”

Mr. Ringstad recounted that a year ago, the Council had been told that 85% of FFD’s calls were medical in nature and asserted that the lack of “paramedic” notation in the organizational chart was misleading. **Mayor O’Neill** suggested that it is not difficult to understand that firefighters can and should be viewed as highly trained personnel.

Ms. Sprinkle concurred that they are veering into the realm of social services but suggested that they were doing so because it was a need in Fairbanks. **Mr. Cleworth** reiterated that potential help exists within the department. **Ms. Sprinkle** pointed out that the “apples and potatoes” comparison was apt and that such work was outside their scope.

Mr. Marney asked about the surplus after adding the CP. CFO Bell reported it would be \$851,772.

Mr. Cleworth discussed the \$400,000 budget for FFD overtime. He pointed out that they had not come close to that low of an amount and asked if it was a reasonable estimate. CFO Bell confirmed that it would likely be a challenge for the Fire Chief to keep overtime to \$400,000 in 2026. Chief Cocco indicated that it would be tight, but the additional nine positions added in 2025 would give operational flexibility they had never before experienced.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if the FFD had lost or would be losing any individuals due to retirement or attrition. Chief Cocco reported that they had not and that they expect to see improved retention.

Mr. Marney shared that earlier in the day he had visited the Fire Chief to ask if they could consider lowering the overtime budget to \$300,000, to no avail.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if the CP had any other involvement within FFD. Chief Cocco shared that M. Smith’s presence within the department had been immensely positive from an operational view.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6331, AS AMENDED, BY ADDING \$144,600 TO THE FIRE DEPARTMENT FOR A COMMUNITY PARAMEDIC AS FOLLOWS:

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

Mayor O’Neill discussed her proposal to reduce the budget for temporary workers at the Public Works (PW) Department.

Mr. Ringstad asked for clarification on the numbers shown in the budget document. Chief of Staff Sanders explained that the initial budget for temporary wages and benefits was \$1.4MM, and that the PW Director had submitted a request for an additional \$400,000 in that account, along with two new laborer positions. He clarified that the Mayor’s proposal is to support the request for the

two laborers but reduce temporary wages and benefits by \$200,000. CFO Bell added that the Mayor's proposal is essentially a wash for the PW budget.

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6331, as Amended, by adding two laborer positions to the PW Department budget at \$106,050 each and reducing temporary wages and benefits by \$200,000.

Mr. Marney asked for input from PW Director Jeremiah Cotter. J. Cotter concurred that the two laborers would reduce temporary labor costs but that there is potential for greater needs if winter weather takes a bad turn. He explained that they have a strange situation where some temporary laborers are essentially permanent, given that the City could not let them go and still be able to provide necessary services. **Mr. Marney** asked J. Cotter if he planned to eventually shift other temporary workers to permanent positions. J. Cotter confirmed that was correct.

Mr. Cleworth asked about the current-year line item balance. CFO Bell reported that as of November 30 the City had spent \$1,053,200, with \$336,300 remaining for 2025.

Ms. Tidwell spoke against the amendment, citing the need for temporary labor for snow removal. J. Cotter recounted that in the previous year he asked for three new positions and was granted one, which is why he requested two in 2026. He added that the permanent laborers also assist with snow removal, so the two line items are connected.

Mr. Cleworth pointed out that in 2024, the City spent over \$1.7MM in temporary labor, which shows the potential volatility of the line item. He agreed that they could gamble and hope for a mild winter but they will have no choice but to pay for the temporary labor if it is a bad winter. He spoke against reducing the temporary wages and labor budget.

Mayor O'Neill asked the CFO to give a brief description of the emergency snow removal fund. CFO Bell explained that a standing balance sheet item of \$250,000 is reserved by the Council for emergency snow removal, which can only be used if there are no remaining funds for temporary labor and an emergency is declared by the Mayor. **Mr. Cleworth** noted that any used emergency funds must also be replaced within a certain timeframe. CFO Bell confirmed that was correct.

J. Cotter reiterated that the two laborers being considered were already treated as permanent employees in every way but their job title, that they are scheduled 365 days a year, and that the change would not have a significant impact on current operations. **Mr. Cleworth** asked if the union contract included a stipulation that the City must convert workers from a temporary to permanent status if a certain number of worked hours is reached. J. Cotter indicated that the provision had been removed some time ago but that temporary employees do receive benefits after six months of work, which is why some workers essentially cost the same as permanent employees.

Ms. Tidwell asked if he was in favor of the amendment. J. Cotter confirmed that it was prudent.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if temporary labor costs the City more per hour than employees in permanent positions. CFO Bell explained the difference in health care costs associated with the positions.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6331, AS AMENDED, BY ADDING TWO LABORER POSITIONS TO THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT BUDGET AT \$106,050 EACH AND REDUCING TEMPORARY WAGES AND BENEFITS BY \$200,000 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Therrien, Sprinkle, Ringstad, Marney

NAYS: Cleworth, Tidwell

Mayor O'Neall declared the MOTION CARRIED.

Mayor O'Neall reviewed the Building Department's request to fund a professional services contract to review housing codes and come up with standardized designs that would allow pre-approved home construction permitting.

Ms. Sprinkle stated that it was an amazing idea worth revisiting; she asked if there was a way to mark certain things to come back to later in the year. **Mayor O'Neall** indicated that she had made notes and would remember to revisit them.

Mayor O'Neall asked the CFO to review the amendments that had passed thus far with associated costs. CFO Bell did so and noted that the remaining surplus was \$839,672.

Mr. Ringstad stated that he was nervous about the amount of reserve, citing areas that had been discussed which would likely pull from the balance through mid-year budget amendments.

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6331, as Amended, by adding a provision that pay raises for any employees not covered by a collective bargaining agreement (CBA) be limited to a maximum of 8%.

Mr. Cleworth noted that 8% was still almost triple the current Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Mayor O'Neall spoke against the amendment, citing challenges with recruitment and retention. She noted that many director-level positions are not paid salaries competitive with industry.

Ms. Therrien asked what the impact would be on the proposed budget if the 8% limit was enacted. CFO Bell explained that the majority of employees not covered under a union contract fall within the Mayor Department, Legal Department, and Office of the City Clerk, and that she would need time to review if any other individuals might be affected.

Mr. Cleworth explained that he had identified three staff members with proposed raises not mandated by contracts: the Chief of Staff, the Human Resources Director, and the FECC Director. He noted that all other raises he had seen were well under 8%. He spoke of how the Council sometimes approves arbitrary amounts for raises that would be better implemented in stages.

Ms. Tidwell indicated there is value in a uniform approach to raises but that there are times when an exception is appropriate. She stated she does not have a problem with the current approach, which is done on a case-by-case basis. She agreed that some salaries were substandard.

Mayor O'Neall asked that the Clerk restate the motion and call the roll on the amendment. **Mr. Cleworth** asked that additional discussion be permitted to better understand the motion. **Mayor O'Neall** ruled Mr. Cleworth out of order and asked the Clerk to call the roll on the amendment.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6331, AS AMENDED, BY ADDING A PROVISION THAT PAY RAISES FOR ANY EMPLOYEES NOT COVERED BY A CBA BE LIMITED TO A MAXIMUM OF 8% AS FOLLOWS:

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

Hearing no requests for additional amendments to the General Fund budget, **Mayor O'Neall** moved to Attachment B – 2026 Capital Fund Supplemental Budget Requests. She reviewed the funding request for the roof membrane replacement Section B under property replacement.

Mr. Cleworth suggested that after they learn more about the status of the Island Homes project, they consider putting more resources into City Hall repairs, particularly the steam heat system.

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Therrien**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6331, as Amended, by adding back \$1,517,041 for the City Hall steam heat system.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if this was intended to take funds away from another area, such as the Island Homes project. **Mr. Cleworth** stated that they would likely address that question next.

Mr. Marney asked how confident they were about the amount. City Engineer Bob Pristash confirmed the construction consultant's estimate for the project was \$4.7MM and that \$3.2MM was already set aside. He noted that the amount of the estimate would increase each year.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6331, AS AMENDED, BY ADDING BACK \$1,517,041 FOR THE CITY HALL STEAM HEAT SYSTEM AS FOLLOWS:

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

Ms. Sprinkle asked what changes were made by the last amendment. CFO Bell described the action's impact on total funds for the steam heat system and Island Homes projects. City Attorney Thomas Chard pointed out that the motion had only increased funds for the heating project and had not reduced anything for Island Homes. Clerk Snider confirmed that the recorded motion aligned with Attorney Chard's recollection. Attorney Chard noted that the Council would need to make an additional adjustment if it wished to change Island Homes funding. CFO Bell confirmed that the unassigned Capital Fund projects balance was below the minimum \$4MM required.

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6331, as Amended, by reducing the committed funds for the Island Homes City match by \$1,517,041.

Mayor O’Neill explained that the City applied for grant funding for the Island Homes project, which was received with positive feedback, although there had not been an award. She noted that the City’s assertion of \$3.3MM in committed funds was an important component of the grant application. She asked the City Engineer if he had an idea of when the City would know whether it would receive the grant. B. Pristash reported that the City would have to reapply in 2026 for the grant, and he believes the application would be due by the end of February. He added that he was unsure when the City would learn of any potential award. He reported that Golden Heart Utilities (GHU) had again committed to participating in the grant application with the City. **Mayor O’Neill** asked when the last time the Island Homes neighborhood had received significant upgrades. B. Pristash stated the water systems are from the 1950s and the sidewalks are from the 1960s.

Ms. Tidwell stated that she wished the information had been disclosed prior to the vote on the amendment for the City Hall steam heat system and that, if so, she would have voted differently.

Ms. Sprinkle discussed the timing of the various projects and asked if the heating system could hold off for a few months until they knew about the Island Homes grant. **Mr. Cleworth** explained that the City still waiting for the results of the recent audit and would hopefully be able to supplement the remaining \$1.7MM in committed funds for Island Homes with 2025 surpluses. He suggested that it would be a small miracle if the City receives the grant.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6331, AS AMENDED, BY REDUCING THE COMMITTED FUNDS FOR THE ISLAND HOMES CITY MATCH BY \$1,517,041 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Marney, Ringstad, Cleworth, Sprinkle, Therrien

NAYS: Tidwell

Mayor O’Neill declared the MOTION CARRIED.

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6331, as Amended, by adding \$23,000 to the Engineering Department’s Capital Budget for surveying equipment.

Ms. Therrien noted that the City’s surveying equipment was old and in need of replacement.

Mr. Marney reported that he had spoken to B. Pristash earlier and confirmed that the equipment was worn out and that the City has legal obligations that require adequate surveying equipment.

Mr. Cleworth asked if this was in fact a Capital item. CFO Bell confirmed that it was due to being over \$10,000 with an expected lifespan of more than two years. **Mr. Cleworth** asked for more details on the equipment. B. Pristash shared that it is the primary unit used when the City Surveyor performs topographical scanning to verify property corners, boundaries, elevation, descent grades, etc. and uses satellite data to help engineers create project surface models. He discussed other uses of the equipment and how vital it is for ensuring accuracy. **Mr. Cleworth** noted if the amendment passes, it would again drop the fund below the minimum balance. CFO Bell confirmed it would.

Ms. Therrien suggested reducing another area to offset the change. **Mr. Cleworth** indicated a preference to amend the General Fund to account for the purchase. **Mayor O’Neill** pointed out that doing so would further reduce 2026 reserves. CFO Bell explained that Mr. Cleworth’s suggestion was to make a \$23,000 transfer from the General Fund to the Engineering Capital Fund for the purchase. **Mayor O’Neill** spoke against the idea, citing concern for setting a precedent of using General Account funds to purchase things that should be bought through the Capital Fund.

Ms. Sprinkle suggested the Council consider reducing the City Hall roof work allocation with the hope that the project’s estimate comes back lower than \$680,000. B. Pristash indicated that Section B of the project is not as bad as other areas, so the estimate may be lower, although a reduction would remove any buffer for contingencies.

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Ms. Therrien**, moved to AMEND the amendment by adding a reduction to the roof membrane replacement Section B from \$680,000 to \$650,000.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND THE AMENDMENT BY ADDING A REDUCTION TO THE ROOF MEMBRANE REPLACEMENT SECTION B FROM \$680,000 TO \$650,000 AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor O’Neill declared the MOTION CARRIED.

Mayor O’Neill ruled that the motion to AMEND Ordinance No. 6331, as Amended, by adding \$23,000 to the Engineering Department’s Capital Budget for surveying equipment and reducing the roof membrane replacement Section B from \$680,000 to \$650,000 was also CARRIED.

Mayor O’Neill called for any further discussion on the 2026 budget and heard none.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6331, AS AMENDED, AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Therrien, Marney, Sprinkle, Ringstad, Tidwell

NAYS: Cleworth

Mayor O’Neill declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6331, as Amended, ADOPTED.

NEW BUSINESS

- a) Ordinance No. 6333 – An Ordinance Partially Releasing a Restrictive Covenant for the Noel Wien Library Lot. Sponsored by Mayor O’Neill.

ADVANCED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- b) Ordinance No. 6334 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Section 2-119(a), Order of Business, Adding a Set Time During the Second Council Meeting of Each Month for Receiving a Report from Leadership in Our Community, Including Denakkanaaga, Fairbanks Native Association, Tanana Chiefs Conference, Doyon, or Other Designated Groups. Sponsored by Councilmembers Sprinkle and Cleworth.

ADVANCED on the CONSENT AGENDA

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TO THE CITY COUNCIL

- a) Reappointment to the Interior Gas Utility Board of Directors

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- b) Appointment to the Joint City/FNSB Chena Riverfront Commission

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- c) Historic Preservation Commission Special Meeting Minutes of August 13, 2025

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- d) Clay Street Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes of November 5, 2025

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Ms. Tidwell reported that on December 6, the Fairbanks Economic Development Corporation had officially been declared as the Alaska Regional Development Organization (ARDOR).

Mr. Marney stated that it had been a good meeting and that he was glad the budget was over.

Mr. Ringstad indicated that he had no reports or comments.

Ms. Sprinkle shared that the Government Relations Committee for the Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce would be meeting the following day and that she also had an upcoming meeting with a State-level commissioner regarding the newly established ARDOR.

Ms. Therrien asked to be added as a cosponsor of Ordinance No. 6334. She reported that she had taken copious notes at the recent AML conference and that one idea for revenue was special tourism sales tax zones, which had been implemented in other communities in Alaska. She thanked Gary Wilken for his continued service as a City rep to the Interior Gas Utility Board of Directors. She shared that she would be out of town until early February but would attend meetings remotely.

Mr. Cleworth referenced the memo regarding the appointment of Stacy Fritz to the Joint City/FNSB Chena Riverfront Commission. He pointed out that in her application packet she mentioned Westmark Hotel dumping warm water into the Chena River directly behind the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center and asked if it was true. City Engineer Pristash suggested that she may be referencing a stormwater discharge location, permitted by the City, which flows along Noble Street and into the river near Griffin Park. He offered to contact S. Fritz to address any concerns regarding the issue. **Mr. Cleworth** wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

CITY CLERK'S REPORT

Clerk Snider thanked the Council and Mayor for their support of the Clerk's Office during the budgeting process and throughout the year as she fulfilled her obligations with the AAMC.

CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Attorney Chard congratulated Clerk Snider on receiving the Clerk of the Year award and congratulated the Council for adopting a budget for 2026. He wished everyone Happy Holidays.

ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no objection, **Mayor O'Neall** declared the meeting adjourned at 11:22 p.m.


MINDY O'NEALL, MAYOR

ATTEST:


D. DAN YIELLE SNIDER, MMC, CITY CLERK

Transcribed by: CC