



FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, MAY 12, 2025
FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
800 CUSHMAN STREET, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

The City Council convened at 6:30 p.m. on the above date, following a 5:30 p.m. graduation ceremony for the Citizen Engagement Academy, to conduct a Regular Meeting of the Fairbanks City Council via Zoom webinar and in the City Council Chambers located at 800 Cushman Street, Fairbanks, Alaska, with Mayor David Pruhs 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
 Richard Sweet, Deputy Police Chief
 Andrew Coccaro, Fire Chief
 Margarita Bell, Chief Financial Officer
 Jeremiah Cotter, Public Works Director
 Robert Pristash, City Engineer
 Jake Merritt, Human Resources Director
 Brynn Butler, Housing Coordinator (remotely)

FLAG SALUTATION

At the request of Mayor Pruhs, **Ms. Sprinkle** led the flag salutation.

INVOCATION

The invocation was given by City Clerk Danyielle Snider.

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.]

Scott McCrea, President and CEO of Explore Fairbanks – S. McCrea provided an update on the Fairbanks tourism industry, noting that the Riverboat Discovery had its first excursion earlier that day, an annual sign that summer is around the corner. He reported that although January was a

strong month based on numbers from the airport, railroad, hotels, and the visitors center, February and March were slower. He added that the upcoming summer season's forecast is uncertain as many businesses are seeing fewer bookings. He stated that there is no identified reason for the decline but that uncertainty is cause for concern. He shared details about the recent annual banquet and the awards given to local individuals and businesses that support the tourism industry.

Mr. Cleworth asked about the new management for the Westmark Fairbanks Hotel & Conference Center. S. McCrea reported that the new owner is the Kishan Group, which manages a few other hotels in Fairbanks as well as some in Juneau and Anchorage. He noted concerns about the future of operations in Fairbanks by Holland America/Princess Tours, the previous owners, but shared that higher-ups in Seattle have insisted that the change in ownership has no impact on their plans with land and water tours in Alaska, including Fairbanks. **Mr. Cleworth** asked S. McCrea if he knew whether the Princess Lodge was going to change ownership. S. McCrea stated that he could not speculate on the matter. **Mr. Cleworth** asked if the Kishan Group was honoring existing reservations. S. McCrea reported that his conversations have indicated that nothing should be changing in the foreseeable future other than some improvements to the property that the previous owner was unlikely to do. He indicated that the new owners hope to do more in the meetings and conventions market.

Ms. Therrien asked S. McCrea if he had heard any concerns regarding shortages of air traffic controllers in Alaska and Seattle or if those issues are primarily occurring around the east coast. S. McCrea stated that he had not heard any concerns specific to Alaska, although it is a major topic nationwide in the travel industry.

Ms. Sprinkle asked S. McCrea if there have been any issues with J-1 visa worker arrangements as a result of the uncertainty in tourism. S. McCrea reported that local employers that use the program have indicated no impact to that area of their operations. He noted that there may be concerns for 2026 due to cuts to the program at the federal level, although it is still running strong across much of Alaska.

Mr. Marney asked S. McCrea whether the number of busses scheduled to stop in the downtown area was forecasted to be lower than past years. S. McCrea confirmed that there had been a dramatic decline in visitors to the downtown business district based on fewer busses stopping there. He explained that the reason Holland America/Princess Tours provided for the change is that the tours are choosing different stops during the midday break in their schedule, although they are still providing complimentary shuttles for those wanting to visit downtown Fairbanks during their stay. **Mr. Marney** asked if the change will hurt the local business owners if it continues. S. McCrea acknowledged that it would not help downtown businesses that depend on those tourist customers.

Ms. Sprinkle reported that she has heard a desperate plea for lunch options in the downtown area on Sundays and asked S. McCrea if he was aware of that concern. S. McCrea confirmed that Sundays are a heavy day for tourist numbers and that there are fewer dining options for lunch on Sundays. He noted that this is a significant opportunity for local businesses.

Mayor Pruhs stated for the record that the City had no prior knowledge of the reduction to Explore Fairbanks' funding by the Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB). He expressed immense appreciation for Explore Fairbanks' efforts to support local tourism and the community overall.

Victor Buberger – V. Buberger stated that he had noticed orange signs in the downtown area, including one advertising a local bar. He noted that he had never seen such a thing and asked for more details on the signs. He questioned whether other businesses could benefit from such signs.

Jo Woodward – J. Woodward expressed concern that the City does not have a sanitarian to inspect shared rentals similar to the inspection process for restaurants. She claimed that there are a fair number of shared rentals and that some refuse to clean up after themselves and maintain a sanitary premises. She added that neither landlords nor property managers are taking responsibility, so tenants are left to clean up after others, which is unfair and inappropriate. She suggested that the problem will undoubtedly get worse as bacteria grows.

Mr. Ringstad asked J. Woodward how she defined shared rentals. J. Woodward stated that she means a place that looks like a regular home but where individual rooms are rented out. She shared that one example is a place on Seventh Avenue with about 25 different rooms, some of which have private restrooms, although the majority do not.

Lester Westling – L. Westling discussed the old, long-abandoned creamery, located at 124 Second Avenue. He shared that he has lived next to the structure for 35 years, and it has been difficult to see it catch fire almost every year. He acknowledged that the former owner, a Mr. Collette, had a lot on his plate with parents falling ill but he was unsure what kept him from cleaning up or developing the property. L. Westling stated that he has been trying to purchase the property for about 20 years and gave brief history of the process. He shared that it had been complicated due to Mr. Collette transferring ownership to another individual for tax purposes, then getting the property back into his name before passing away. He stated that the property was transferred to Mr. Collette's niece after his death. He confirmed that the niece honored the deal in progress and that he was finally able to purchase the property the previous summer. L. Westling reported that he had been working on it for the last two weeks and affirmed that the building would be secured and cleaned up. He encouraged the Council to move forward with incentives to help owners renovating rundown properties in the City. He suggested that if such a program was in place 30 years ago, that property and others like it probably would not have sat vacant for these years.

Ms. Therrien asked L. Westling if he planned to tear down the walls of the structure. L. Westling shared that the concrete pad is eight inches thick and the walls have rebar every foot. He explained that it was built with old-school construction methods and that if he is able to preserve some of the structure's bones he would like to, especially given the historical component of the property.

Ms. Sprinkle thanked L. Westling for making an effort to clean up the property. She asked if he was aware of some recent fires at the property. L. Westling shared that as he has been cleaning up the property, he has found evidence that suggests individuals had lived within the structure at some point. He explained that he has been burning some remains of various furniture and wooden crates, following the burn permit process and keeping the appropriate City departments informed. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked L. Westling if he owns the adjacent property. L. Westling confirmed that he does.

Mr. Ringstad expressed admiration for L. Westling's persistence. L. Westling shared that he thought the deal was going to end when Mr. Collette passed away and voiced his appreciation for his niece allowing him to purchase the property.

Mayor Pruhs thanked L. Westling for the effort he is putting into the property and noted the many discussions that had taken place about the old dairy over the years. He acknowledged that the work would take time, and he committed to working with L. Westling.

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA

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

Mayor Pruhs pulled item 12(a), Resolution No. 5172, from the consent agenda.

Mayor Pruhs called for objection to the APPROVAL of the agenda, as amended, and hearing none, so ORDERED.

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

SPECIAL ORDERS

- a) The Fairbanks City Council held a public hearing and considered the following alcohol license application for transfer of controlling interest and restaurant endorsement:

Type/Lic.:	Beverage Dispensary, Lic. #727
DBA:	Lavelle's Bistro
Applicant:	Café de Paris Catering Company
Location:	575 1st Avenue, Fairbanks

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to WAIVE PROTEST on the alcohol license application for transfer of controlling interest and restaurant endorsement.

Mayor Pruhs called for Public Testimony.

Frank Eagle, co-owner of Lavelle's Bistro – F. Eagle asked the Council to consider postponing action until June 9. He explained that the application may need revision once they sort out the new corporation's name and ownership, adding their desire to avoid further complication to the process.

Mr. Ringstad withdrew his motion to WAIVE PROTEST.

Mr. Ringstad, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to POSTPONE the consideration of the alcohol license application for transfer of controlling interest and restaurant endorsement to June 9, 2025.

Clerk Snider noted that the City's deadline to respond to the Alcohol & Marijuana Control Office (AMCO) is May 30, and while the Council could postpone the matter, the June 9 meeting would be after the deadline. She stated the Council would miss the opportunity to protest the application if that was the action the Council wished to take at that time.

Mayor Pruhs declared that he does not see the City having any interest in protesting the application and questioned whether they truly needed to postpone the vote. F. Eagle explained that the change of entity had legal considerations which could be further complicated if not done correctly. Clerk Snider asked Mr. Eagle if he had already spoken with AMCO staff to see if the application could be paused in the process. F. Eagle stated that he did not realize the City's response deadline was May 30. Clerk Snider explained that while the City has 60 days to respond to AMCO from the initial date of being notified of an application, she must allow time for certain City departments to review applications and provide recommendations. She noted that the internal review coupled with the schedule of Council Meetings often results in only having a one-meeting buffer, if any at all, before the City's deadline to AMCO. **Mayor Pruhs** asked if the deadline would be extended with a resubmitted application. Clerk Snider acknowledged that she cannot speak for AMCO but is under the assumption that withdrawing and resubmitting an application would restart the process timeline. F. Eagle pointed out that the Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) Board already approved the application, pending the response from the local governing bodies.

City Attorney Chard advised that the City Clerk could send notice to AMCO to inform them that, at the request of the licensee, the City will be considering the application at a slightly later date. He suggested that by doing so the State would be kept in the loop and should be willing to work with the City, especially given that a withdrawal and resubmission creates more work for everyone.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if the delay would cause any interruptions for the business. F. Eagle clarified that the business would carry on unchanged as the application process runs its course.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO POSTPONE THE CONSIDERATION OF THE ALCOHOL LICENSE APPLICATION FOR TRANSFER OF CONTROLLING INTEREST AND RESTAURANT ENDORSEMENT TO JUNE 9, 2025, AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

- b) The Fairbanks City Council held a public hearing and considered the following onsite consumption endorsement application:

Type/Lic.: Marijuana Onsite Consumption Endorsement, Lic. #12325
DBA: GOOD Cannabis
Applicant: Good, LLC
Location: 356 Old Steese Highway, Fairbanks

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to WAIVE PROTEST on the marijuana onsite consumption endorsement application.

Mayor Pruhs called for Public Testimony.

Cindy Olsen – C. Olsen shared that she is speaking as a landowner and representative of five individuals that make up Olsen Family Investments. She expressed concerns with the application

to allow onsite consumption and for public safety. She noted that the prohibition against driving under the influence of marijuana would likely mean that most people would be walking home. She explained that they already have a large number of transient people who walk near her commercial building. She added that there has been increased vandalism and break-ins in that area, forcing them to set up security cameras. She asserted that the endorsement would be a deterrent to potential tenants and other nearby businesses due to the uptick in people walking the streets. She discussed owning a home in the same neighborhood and their desire to not see more impaired individuals wandering around outside. She declared that she is against the endorsement, as are her siblings.

Mr. Ringstad asked for a reference to the location of C. Olson's building in relation to the marijuana establishment. C. Olsen stated that her property is a block away, towards the Wendell Street Bridge, next to Graphic North.

Ms. Sprinkle asked C. Olson if her property is commercial. C. Olsen confirmed that there are three lots in the area she is referring to, two of which are commercial and one is residential.

Ms. Therrien asked C. Olson if she had spoken with the marijuana establishment owners about her concerns. C. Olsen stated that she had not.

Mr. Marney pointed out that the licensee has been in business for five or six years. He asked C. Olson if the presence of the business has changed her life since it opened. C. Olsen declared that it had, noting an uptick in transient people walking through her property and often leaving stolen items behind. **Mr. Marney** asked if she knew for sure that those individuals had come from the business in question or were under the influence of marijuana. C. Olsen stated that she could not prove either circumstance but reiterated that onsite consumption was not needed in the area.

Greg Allison, co-owner of Good, LLC – G. Allison reported that GOOD Cannabis has been in business for eight years. He recognized how marijuana tax revenue is put to good use by the City, noting that he had stopped by earlier in the day to make his regular payment. He recognized C. Olson's concerns and recounted coming before the Council years ago and making a commitment to follow best industry practices and do everything they could to give back to the community. He shared that his business partner serves as the Acting President of the Alaska Marijuana Industry Association and that they follow all regulations precisely, not just according to their own view but as recently stated by an auditor. G. Allison discussed aligning with other best practice companies and taking pride in philanthropic endeavors, noting their sponsorship of the upcoming Midnight Sun Festival. He reiterated the business's commitment to continue following best practices and to not contribute to the issues raised by C. Olsen.

Ms. Sprinkle asked for more details on the type of consumption that would be permitted under the endorsement. G. Allison clarified that consumption would not include any combustion and only edible items would be allowed for consumption. He noted that regulations limit intake to only 25 mg. and that their offerings would essentially include 5 to 10 mg. infusions in drinks like coffees or hand-crafted drinks, as well as approved baked goods.

Mr. Ringstad asked what hours the business operates. G. Allison stated that they currently run 365 days a year from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. but that the new café portion would close several hours earlier than the retail store. **Mr. Ringstad** acknowledged the concern about individuals

wandering around outside at all hours of the night and stated that many problems occur after midnight. He pointed out that those consuming product and leaving the premises at 7:00 or 8:00 p.m. is different than doing so after 11:00 p.m. G. Allison expressed support for other businesses in the strip mall where the business is located but noted that when he comes to work in the mornings, the litter he has to pick up around the store is not cannabis-related – rather, it is garbage related to alcohol. He added that there is often vomit on the sidewalk and in the parking lot.

Mr. Marney pointed out that there are other locations in Fairbanks that have onsite consumption endorsements, and he never seems to see those businesses referenced in daily police blotters or DUI reports. G. Allison concurred that cannabis industry regulations make it hard to be successful without full compliance and that they go the extra mile to promote responsible use of their products. He noted that the 25 mg. limit, for most people, will not do much to impair driving. He suggested that, in contrast, the effect of just a couple of alcoholic drinks is significant, yet most bars do not start their day with vehicles left in the parking lot from the night before, which perhaps should be more common. G. Allison asserted that they will not see examples of people being overserved and that the intake limit for onsite consumption is low.

Mayor Pruhs pointed out that GOOD Cannabis was one of the original retail locations in Fairbanks after marijuana was legalized in Alaska. He asked G. Allison if the business has ever had a complaint filed against it with AMCO. G. Allison declared that they have not had a single notice of violation for their business. **Mayor Pruhs** noted that they can still only take cash payments due to the challenges with the emerging industry. G. Allison explained that MAC Federal Credit Union is the only financial institution in the state that offers services to the cannabis industry, noting that many cannabis businesses across Alaska do not have any banking options. **Mayor Pruhs** asked how many people GOOD Cannabis employs and if the endorsement would increase staffing. G. Allison replied that there are 35 year-round employees, and the endorsement would increase employment. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that there are only two other onsite consumption locations within city limits and that he should be prepared to have the spotlight on his business.

Ms. Sprinkle discussed the business's proximity to a restaurant that serves alcohol and asked what would happen if someone showed up to the marijuana establishment impaired by alcohol. G. Allison shared that the safety orientation for all employees includes protocols for recognizing when someone is under the influence of any substance or is otherwise incoherent and asking them to leave. He confirmed that they will call the police if an individual refuses to comply.

Mayor Pruhs discussed the various businesses around the subject location and asked G. Allison if he is prepared for people to consume cannabis and then walk out into a fairly busy parking lot. G. Allison confirmed that is also part of employees' safety training and that he is incredibly vigilant in making sure employees do all they can to ensure safe operations, including having security cameras in every direction outside and for all areas inside the store.

Mr. Cleworth asked G. Allison if employees will be monitoring patrons in the consumption area to ensure that they are only consuming the products available for purchase within that space. G. Allison confirmed that they will be monitoring and logging all purchases and dosages in the consumption area and that no outside product will be allowed to be consumed therein. He added that a dedicated employee will be on the floor at all times to keep an eye out for policy violations. **Mr. Cleworth** asked if the cutoff for consumption at 7:00 p.m., which was stated earlier, is a firm

time or whether it is subject to change. G. Allison indicated that they are still finalizing plans and the time could go later; however, he guaranteed that they would not be offering onsite consumption as late as 10:00 p.m. or 11:00 p.m. **Mr. Cleworth** asked what kind of liability insurance the business carries should someone get into an accident after leaving their establishment, having just consumed their product. G. Allison confirmed that they are fully insured for commercial, property, workers compensation, and all other required aspects of their industry. He acknowledged that Mr. Cleworth's concern is a concern for all business owners in both the cannabis and alcohol industry and that all they can do is be hyper-vigilant with best practices, follow serving guidelines, advocate for responsible choices, and ensure cameras are always in proper working order.

Amy Collins – A. Collins shared that she is one of three owners at Aurora Tutoring School. She stated that she and the other owners are against the endorsement as it would negatively affect their tutoring school, which has been in operation for 14 years.

Ms. Sprinkle noted that the school had been open for longer than the marijuana establishment and asked if she had noticed a difference since the business opened. A. Collins claimed that there are many transient people that are cause for calls to the police. She stated that she never knows if their impairment is due to alcohol or drugs but that the school has lost business because of the problem. She reported that multiple families left eight years ago when the establishment first opened as they did not want their child attending a school that close to a cannabis retail store.

Mr. Ringstad discussed the City's effort to clean up the downtown core area and issues such as public intoxication. He raised the question of whether the efforts should be expanded to include nearby areas such as the tutoring school and the property C. Olsen discussed.

Ms. Sprinkle suggested that the frustrations being brought forward regarding transient people may not be directly associated with the marijuana establishment. A. Collins acknowledged that she could not say whether the transient individuals have consumed alcohol or marijuana, as she does not feel comfortable engaging with them. **Ms. Sprinkle** spoke of the significance of the issues being addressed but reiterated that problems should not be attributed to a specific business without being sure that they are responsible.

Mr. Marney pointed out that the Council gets reports for police calls and other emergency service activities any time a license application is being reviewed. He added that the reports are for the general location, not the exact business address. He indicated that he did not recall seeing any large number of calls for the entire area in the past and asked if he was mistaken. **Mayor Pruhs** concurred that it was not a problem property but agreed that its location near the river, bridges, parks, and main roads out of downtown make it a heavy pass-through area.

There being no more comments, **Mayor Pruhs** closed the public hearing.

Ms. Therrien noted that the memo in the agenda packet showed no police calls in the past year as well as no departmental protests to the application. She asked if the Mayor had a recommendation on the matter. **Mayor Pruhs** declared that neither the property nor the licensee are considered a nuisance and that he recommends the Council waive protest.

Ms. Sprinkle agreed with the Mayor and suggested that the recently approved Emergency Service Patrol (ESP) may be helpful in alleviating some of the issues that had been highlighted. She stated that she did not want to ignore the concerns raised by neighboring property and business owners nor did she want to discount the significant effort of the licensee to follow best practices and be a responsible license holder in the industry.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO WAIVE PROTEST ON THE MARIJUANA ONSITE CONSUMPTION ENDORSEMENT APPLICATION AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

MAYOR'S COMMENTS AND REPORT

Mayor Pruhs asked Olivia Rodriguez, owner of Golden Heart Consulting, to discuss the Downtown Market, scheduled for its inaugural event later in the week.

O. Rodriguez shared that the upcoming Downtown Market had been two years in the making and was made possible because of bed tax dollars, the Downtown Association of Fairbanks, and Big Ray's. She discussed the various vendors, musical groups, activities, and themes that are planned for the four events taking place over the next several months.

Mayor Pruhs reported that the ESP program was operational. He shared that the first round of letters had gone out to the owners of 12 properties that had been deemed blighted and while some are working on improvements, others told them to leave. He stated that the administration is also exploring a program to promote restaurants offering sidewalk dining when space is available.

COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. Ringstad addressed the concerns about transient people that had been raised and noted that the City is making efforts to improve those types of situations. He expressed gratitude to hear about the ESP program being back in operation.

Ms. Therrien echoed Mr. Ringstad's appreciation for the ESP program and requested they keep an eye on the area that had been addressed during the onsite consumption endorsement discussion.

Ms. Tidwell stated that she is proud of the participation in the friendly bowling match against the Borough Assembly. She stated she believes the Assembly enjoyed it as well, even though the Council won. She reported that the Economic Development Commission will meet the following day and that they hope to have a quorum in order to making a recommendation in support of the Fairbanks Economic Development Commission's (FEDC) effort to become the Alaska Regional Development Organization (ARDOR) for the area.

Ms. Sprinkle reported no movement on groups or committees she is involved in. She thanked the Mayor and City Clerk for facilitating the bowling match and expressed interest in seeing the Police and Fire Departments participate in something similar.

Mr. Marney acknowledged that despite the difference in politics between the City Council and Borough Assembly, it was great to interact as regular people who all love the community.

Mr. Cleworth pointed out that while the ESP is a good tool for the City, the staff cannot pick anyone up without their consent, which means in some cases there is nothing they can do to resolve a situation. He expressed sympathy with the two individuals who voiced frustration with public intoxication and transient people. He stated he sees it constantly downtown and City employees see it in the park next to City Hall. He suggested that the problem is growing and that most situations involve alcohol. He concurred that it is a complicated issue but that things could still be done. He spoke of the Governor of California's address earlier in the day which highlighted a change in approach to dealing with similar problems there. He expressed concern about the sale of Fairbanks-based assets by Holland America/Princess Tours. He discussed how most tourists only get a single day in Fairbanks during their visit to Alaska and that many opportunities to experience the community are missed. He expressed hope that people have not lost interest in Fairbanks.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a) Ordinance No. 6285, as Amended – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Section 74-36 Economic Development Property Tax Rebate and Enacting Section 74-37 Tax Incentive for Property Development, Redevelopment, or Renovation. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs and Councilmembers Sprinkle and Ringstad. POSTPONED from the Regular Meeting of December 16, 2024; a public hearing was held on July 8, 2024.

Note: Ordinance No. 6285, as Amended, was introduced at the Regular Meeting of June 24, 2024, and ADVANCED to the Regular Meeting of July 8, 2024, at which time a motion to ADOPT was made and a public hearing was held. The ordinance was POSTPONED to the Regular Meeting of December 16, 2024, at which time it was POSTPONED again to the Regular Meeting of May 12, 2025. The motion to ADOPT remained on the floor.

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to POSTPONE Ordinance No. 6285, as Amended, to the Regular Meeting of June 9, 2025.

Attorney Chard advised that due to the various postponements and the length of time that had passed since the original public hearing, it would be appropriate to hold another public hearing prior to adoption. **Mayor Pruhs** concurred that another public hearing would be held.

Mr. Marney discussed the importance of having buy-in from the Borough on the effort and asked what the best process would be to achieve that. **Mr. Ringstad** reported that when they met with the Borough a few weeks prior, the Borough Mayor was supportive of the program and expressed willingness to bring it before the Assembly. He stated that if the City and Borough each had a similar program, it would increase the chances of success.

Mayor Pruhs directed that they should keep discussion germane to the motion to postpone. He concurred that the meeting with the Borough Mayor had been positive and that the primary issue to be worked out is what incentives for property owners would actually spur the development sought. He noted that answering this question has been the basis for the postponements.

Ms. Sprinkle added that there has also been a need to get input from the City Attorney for various components of the program.

Mr. Cleworth asked if the Council should hold a public hearing presently in order to meet that obligation. Attorney Chard advised that it would be best if the Council made any desired amendments first, then hold a public hearing on the product of those changes. He stated that in addition to the timeframe from introduction to adoption, potential substantive changes prompted him to recommend a second public hearing. **Ms. Therrien** asked Attorney Chard if he was encouraging amendments to be made prior to postponement, or at a later time. Attorney Chard indicated that either option would be acceptable, depending on the Council's wishes but that the public should have an opportunity to weigh in on the final product. **Ms. Therrien** pointed out that there are sunset dates within the ordinance that should be shifted but acknowledged that they can address that later. **Ms. Sprinkle** agreed that some numbers and dates still need to be ironed out.

Mr. Ringstad concurred that another public hearing should be held.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO POSTPONE ORDINANCE NO. 6285, AS AMENDED, TO THE REGULAR MEETING OF JUNE 9, 2025, AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

- b) Ordinance No. 6313 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Sec. 50-288(b), Paid Parental Leave, to Clarify Eligibility. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

Ms. Tidwell, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6313.

Mayor Pruhs called for testimony and hearing none, declared Public Testimony closed.

Mayor Pruhs asked for Chief of Staff Mike Sanders to elaborate on the ordinance.

M. Sanders stated that this was an effort to clean up language in the Fairbanks General Code (FGC) that had been brought to light by Human Resources. He explained that the threshold for medical maternity leave had been deemed too high and that paid parental leave did not include mothers. He pointed out that the existing language creates a possible scenario where an employee could give birth yet not qualify for either program.

Ms. Sprinkle expressed thanks for bringing forth the fix.

Ms. Therrien recounted that they had received an email from someone suggesting that instead of using the term “employee” they should use “mother.” Attorney Chard explained that other sections of FGC utilize the term “employee” and that it would be appropriate to have consistent language.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6313 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Cleworth, Marney, Ringstad Sprinkle, Therrien, Tidwell
NAYS: None
Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance
No. 6313 ADOPTED.

NEW BUSINESS

- a) Resolution No. 5172 – A Resolution Establishing a Storefront Improvement Program.
Introduced by Mayor Pruhs and Councilmembers Sprinkle and Marney.

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to APPROVE Resolution No. 5172.

Mayor Pruhs shared that O. Rodriguez had shown him photos of Fairbanks storefronts from the 1960s to discuss ways to improve the downtown area. He reported that funding options through state grants would not be available but a small portion of local room rental tax revenue could be used. He discussed researching similar programs in other Alaskan communities as well as examples from Iowa. He reviewed the following parameters: an equal match from the building owner; an initial investment of \$250,000 by the City; a requirement for him to report back to the Council regarding successes and failures in order to determine whether the pilot program would be funded again; and a controlled application and review process with specific guidelines. **Mayor Pruhs** asserted that this is one of the steps the City is pursuing to revitalize downtown and listed other examples of how the City is working to invigorate the area.

Ms. Therrien suggested that a lot of work can be done by individual property owners and asked if the threshold to require a bid from a licensed contractor should be \$10,000 instead of the proposed \$5,000. **Mayor Pruhs** explained that they want to follow certain State of Alaska contracting laws but ultimately want to have a clear picture of what the owner wants to do, if it is feasible to be done on their own, or if building permits are required, which may then require a contractor. He noted that every property is different, and they will make reasonable decisions.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if there would be a sunset date to the program. **Mayor Pruhs** discussed the timeline for completion requirements by the owners and stated that he would report to the Council on the program to determine its viability and whether it should be further funded.

Ms. Tidwell asked for clarification on the fiscal note that showed \$250,000 for the program but within a line item of \$350,000. Chief Financial Officer Margarita Bell referenced the 2025 approved City budget which included \$350,000 for the line item “room rental projects,” of which the storefront program would use \$250,000.

Mr. Marney reported that Explore Fairbanks had approved \$50,000 to add to the program and asked how they might supplement that contribution. M. Sanders explained that he and S. McCrea had discussed Explore Fairbanks’ “Downtown Enhancement Fund” and that the organization would have discretion on how those funds are used, either to help individual businesses meet the match requirement, pursue a larger project, or increase the number of grant recipients. He noted that the City’s application will include a single checkbox for individuals to indicate they would like their request to also be routed to Explore Fairbanks for consideration in their program.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if the City's review panel would forward a denied application to Explore Fairbanks if the application had the box checked to apply for the Downtown Enhancement Fund. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that they would consider that scenario if it occurred but noted that applicants can go directly to Explore Fairbanks if they seek that funding. M. Sanders confirmed that the published information will point out that the funding options are separate, even if they have overlapping purposes, and that applicants can go directly to Explore Fairbanks for their program.

Mr. Ringstad discussed the possibility of Explore Fairbanks funds being used to fulfil the match requirement for applicants and suggested that owners should have some skin in the game. M. Sanders concurred that best practices indicate that there should be a match requirement by an owner. He stated that he does not believe Explore Fairbanks intends to cover the entire amount of anyone's match.

Mr. Cleworth indicated that he had a conflict of interest with the resolution and program. **Mayor Pruhs** declared the conflict valid and affirmed that Mr. Cleworth would abstain.

Ms. Therrien pointed out that the resolution does not include a contractor requirement but the attached paperwork outlining the program does. **Mayor Pruhs** confirmed that the contractor requirement was in place but that it could be waived for smaller projects on a case-by-case basis for things that do not require building permits, such as painting.

Mr. Ringstad asked to clarify whether or not the language of the resolution gave discretionary authority to the Mayor to waive certain requirements, such as needing to use a contractor. Attorney Chard confirmed that the resolution affirms that the Mayor has discretion over various aspects of the program, including the guidelines within the associated brochure.

Ms. Therrien discussed what appeared to be confusing language between the resolution, the brochure, and their current discussion. **Mayor Pruhs** pointed out that the Council is voting on the resolution as it reads – not the brochure or other application paperwork.

Mr. Ringstad acknowledged that the specific parameters of the program can be adjusted as needed by the Mayor, but such changes would not require amendments to the resolution.

Ms. Sprinkle agreed that while she has no problems with the resolution, she believes some adjustments should be made to the brochure and other documents. **Mayor Pruhs** indicated that he would be revising the brochure based on the Council's discussion.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION NO. 5172 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Ringstad, Tidwell, Therrien, Sprinkle, Marney

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: Cleworth

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Resolution No. 5172 APPROVED.

- b) Resolution No. 5173 – A Resolution Authorizing the City of Fairbanks to Participate in Alaska Public Risk Alliance's Joint Insurance Arrangement. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TO THE CITY COUNCIL

- a) Clay Street Cemetery Commission Minutes of March 5, 2025

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- b) Clay Street Cemetery Commission Minutes of April 2, 2025

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- c) Permanent Fund Review Board Minutes of January 27, 2025

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. Cleworth stated that he had nothing to report and no comments.

Ms. Therrien shared details about the recent meeting of the Permanent Fund Review Board, including a discussion of how to increase the Fund's earnings. She stated that was a complicated issue and that it might be beneficial for a couple more Councilmembers to attend the next meeting. She reported on the Legislative Committee and gave updates on various happenings in Juneau. She stated that the City may get as little as \$457,000 through the Community Assistance Program (CAP) in 2025, and that it may continue to dwindle to \$245,000 in 2026 and to \$140,000 in 2027.

Mr. Marney discussed his efforts to call in and provide public testimony on various legislative items during the current session. He praised Ms. Therrien's work on the Legislative Committee.

Ms. Sprinkle asked how much the City received from the CAP the previous year. CFO Bell stated that it received about \$485,000, which was comparable to what was awarded the year before that. **Mr. Cleworth** pointed out that the City only budgeted to receive \$85,000. CFO Bell confirmed that the next budget amendment would include the additional amount awarded by the program.

Mr. Ringstad expressed frustration with some of the excuses he has heard from legislators regarding why certain legislation or ideas do not get pursued. He stated he believes sometimes hearings continue to be scheduled simply to make sure the clock runs out and the item dies.

Mr. Marney concurred with Mr. Ringstad's thoughts. He reported that a subject matter expert would be providing testimony, by invitation, regarding the safe surrender baby box legislation.

Ms. Tidwell stated that she had nothing to report and no further comments.

CITY CLERK'S REPORT

Clerk Snider shared a short video highlighting the recent bowling match between the City Council and Borough Assembly.

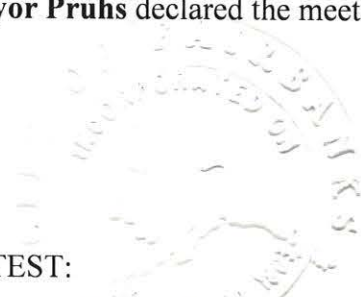
CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Attorney Chad stated that he had nothing to report.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Tidwell, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to ADJOURN the meeting.


Mayor Pruhs declared the meeting adjourned at 8:17 p.m.





DAVID PRUHS, MAYOR

ATTEST:



D. DANYELLE SNIDER, MMC, CITY CLERK

Transcribed by: CC