



FAIRBANKS DIVERSITY COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
FEBRUARY 11, 2025, 5:30 – 7:00 P.M.  
HELD VIA [ZOOM WEBINAR](#) AND AT  
FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
800 CUSHMAN STREET, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA



The **Fairbanks Diversity Council (FDC)** met on the above date to conduct a Regular Meeting via Zoom Webinar and at the City Council Chambers, 800 Cushman Street, Fairbanks, Alaska. **Chair Juanita Webb** (Seat D) was physically present, and the following members were in attendance:

**Members Present (In Person):**

June Rogers, Seat C  
Lonny Marney, City Council Member

**Members Present (Zoom):**

Marsha Oss, Seat E  
Karen Blackburn, Seat I  
Herb Butler, Seat J  
Jake Merritt, HR Director

**Members Absent:**

*Vacant*, Seat A  
Richard Basarab, Seat B  
Dorothy Shockley, Seat F  
Jonathan Bagwill, Seat G (excused)  
Wendy Tisland, Seat H (excused)  
*Vacant*, Seat K  
David Pruhs, Mayor (excused)

**Also Present:**

D. Danyielle Snider, City Clerk

**CALL TO ORDER** (Reading of Mission Statement and Land Acknowledgement)

**Chair Webb** called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. The Land Acknowledgement was read by J. Rogers, and the Mission Statement was read by L. Marney.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**Chair Webb** led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**J. Rogers**, seconded by **M. Oss**, moved to APPROVE the agenda.

**Chair Webb** called for a voice vote on the motion to APPROVE the agenda, and all members voted in favor.

**APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES**

a) Regular Meeting Minutes of January 14, 2025

**M. Oss**, seconded by **K. Blackburn**, moved to APPROVE the minutes.

**Chair Webb** called for any objection to the motion to APPROVE the minutes, and no members objected.

**CITIZENS' COMMENTS** (Limited to 3 Minutes) – None

**REPORT FROM THE CHAIR**

a) FDC Member Attendance Report

**Chair Webb** stated that she requested that the attendance report be included in the agenda packet, as some members are struggling with attendance. She stated that there are currently two vacancies and possibly another soon to come. She offered to make personal phone calls to those members who have not been attending regularly and asked members present if there were any other ideas. Members briefly discussed the attendance issue and reviewed the FDC's attendance policy.

**M. Oss**, seconded by **H. Butler**, moved to have Chair Webb make contact with members with low attendance and let them know what is going on or let them know that they have been removed.

**Chair Webb** called for a voice vote on the motion to have Chair Webb make contact with members with low attendance, and all members voted in favor.

**M. Oss** stated the FDC should follow the policy in place. **H. Butler** asked whether the mayor is exempt from attendance requirement. Clerk Snider explained the Mayor's role on the FDC as set forth in the Fairbanks General Code. She stated that because of that role, she believes the Mayor would be exempt from the attendance requirement. **H. Butler** suggested inviting the Mayor on a regular basis to FDC meetings, and **Chair Webb** agreed to reach out to the Mayor.

**Chair Webb** raised the issue of in-person versus remote attendance. There was a brief discussion, and the consensus was that in-person attendance is preferred unless a member is travelling or ill. **M. Oss** suggested waiting until other members are present before making a new rule. **Chair Webb** stated that she may be able to gather feedback from those members when she makes phone calls.

**Chair Webb** stated that following the recent election, there was an Executive Order signed by President Trump, which caused the America 250 event to be put on hold. She stated that she has a copy that she is willing to share with members. She commented that there is potential the FDC may support the event in a different format.

**M. Oss** stated she is grateful that the event is on hold because she does not agree with what has been discussed about the event so far. She stated the delay will allow her the opportunity to speak with Adia, the woman in charge of the event.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

a) Human Library Update – Event Coordinators: Oss, Marney, Webb

**M. Oss** stated that it would be good to meet soon with L. Marney and Chair Webb. **L. Marney** stated that he would soon be out of town but could reach out when he returns.

b) Diversity Fair Update – Event Coordinators: Webb, Blackburn

**Chair Webb** stated that she and K. Blackburn had not met since the last meeting. She indicated that communication with the Pioneer Park has been poor, but she is hopeful that the FDC will be able to use the green space outside of the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center (MTCVC) for the event. She stated that Explore Fairbanks leadership seems to be in favor of the idea, and she will check with Parks and Recreation to see if it is possible. **J. Rogers** repeatedly asked what the difficulty was with communication. **Chair Webb** replied that communication has not been good. She stated that there may be some reorganization going on. She indicated that holding the event at the MTCVC may be a better idea for the first year.

**M. Oss** asked L. Marney and Chair Webb if they would be available to meet in regard to the Human Library on February 28. The three agreed to meet on February 28 at noon at City Hall. **H. Butler** reminded everyone that he had already volunteered to be a book for the Human Library.

**Chair Webb** asked K. Blackburn if she was available to meet in regard to the Diversity Fair on February 28 from 2 – 3 p.m. K. Blackburn confirmed that she was available. **Chair Webb** stated that a meeting location could be decided later.

c) Race Against Racism Update – Event Coordinators: Webb, Oss, Blackburn

**Chair Webb** reported that she had no update on the Race Against Racism.

d) Diversity Activity Book

**Chair Webb** reported that she had no update on the Diversity Activity Book project.

## NEW BUSINESS

a) Letter Re: Nunamiut Teams and Lathrop High School Sports Event

**Chair Webb** opened the discussion by referencing information provided in the agenda packet of social media posts from North Slope parents regarding an issue that took place at a recent sporting event at Lathrop High School (LHS). She also referenced a draft letter of response she had prepared for FDC members to review. She stated that the issue involves two different communities and she wants to address the situation, although it is difficult having not been there. She stated she would prefer not to wait to respond and that her intent is to respond to those who created the post, but also the two schools involved and the Borough School District. Members took a moment to review the materials, then began discussing the allegations made.

**M. Oss** stated that one of the posts was sent to her by a friend. She stated she was not present at the event, but these are the kinds of issues the FDC should address. She commented that the FDC should fact-check but that she is saddened if there is even a kernel of truth that this is what youth are doing in the community.

**L. Marney** agreed that it is an unfortunate event. He stated that having been involved in sports for much of his life, he believes that coaches usually deal with those types of issues on the spot. He stated that he tries to live his life by the rule: "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

**H. Butler** asked what occurred. **M. Oss** explained that a friend of a friend who was at the event reported that as the visiting team was leaving the court, they were verbally assaulted for being Native by LHS students. She shared that, allegedly, the youth from Nunamiut did not retaliate but got on the bus and left as the verbal assault continued. **H. Butler** commented that bringing it to the FDC was the right move. He suggested that the FDC invite someone to a meeting who could substantiate the story.

**Chair Webb** stated that she invited the person who made the post to speak to the FDC remotely, but that did not happen. She stated that her draft response is to apologize to the visiting team, to express support for speaking with the young people about the incident to build them up, and to encourage parents and schools to promote good sportsmanship. **H. Butler** suggested making contact with the principal of LHS and inviting him to an FDC meeting. **Chair Webb** stated that her intent was to send the letter to LHS. **M. Oss** supported H. Butler's suggestion and commented that her understanding was that others, including parents, were behaving poorly.

**K. Blackburn** stated that she was not at the event, but she picked up some young people afterwards. She stated that she spoke with one of the assistant principals after the incident. She shared that LHS administration has already dealt with the students involved and has taken appropriate actions with the instigators. **K. Blackburn** reported that both sides were involved in the immature and inappropriate behavior, including parents. She stated that the LHS leadership is aware of the Facebook post and the administration apologized to the visiting team. She stated she is unaware whether or not the visiting team apologized to LHS. **M. Oss** and **H. Butler** thanked K. Blackburn for sharing the information.

**L. Marney** stated that Matt Wilken, the LHS coach, is a friend of his. He offered to contact M. Wilken and verify whether things were handled by LHS. Members discussed how to move forward in regard to the issue. **H. Butler** again suggested writing a letter to the LHS principal and inviting them to attend an FDC meeting. **M. Oss** agreed. The consensus of the group was to have L. Marney reach out to the coach and go from there.

b) Discussion on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Methodology

**H. Butler** stated that he brought up DEI at a previous meeting before President Trump took office and placed a pervasive opposition on DEI. He expressed concern with how extensive the effects would be. He shared some of his experiences as an Alaska Native, especially as it related to being working in a variety of companies. He stated he has many friends and relatives who have had to contend with racist issues in Alaska and in Fairbanks. **H. Butler** reminded fellow members that there is a good Wikipedia write-up about DEI, and he shared excerpts from the site: 1) Diversity involves gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, age, culture, class, religion, and opinion; 2) Equity is fairness, justice, and a focus on social disparities; and 3) Inclusion is a statement that everyone's voice will be heard with a sense of belonging and integration. He expressed concern with what the Presidential administration will do to the country over the next four years.

**M. Oss** agreed with H. Butler's assessment of what will happen under the new Presidential administration over the next four years and thanked him for raising the issue. She stated the FDC will likely have many items to address and suggested that members should remain open-minded and objective. **J. Rogers** thanked H. Butler and M. Oss for sharing their comments and commended M. Oss for the work she does and for her caring attitude.

### **FDC MEMBERS' COMMENTS**

**Rogers** stated that she had no comments.

**L. Marney** stated that it was a good meeting and that he learned some things.

**J. Merritt** thanked everyone in attendance.

**M. Oss** spoke about how she struggled after the last FDC meeting and indicated that she considered resigning. She stated that she joined the FDC because it has everything to do with marginalized individuals in the community. She shared that when she sees people, she does not see color or race; rather, she sees humans. She indicated that she was disturbed with the America 250 presentation given at the last meeting and that when she expressed her feelings to fellow FDC members, she was concerned with the feedback she received saying that she should simply not attend the event. She stated that is the FDC's job to see what is happening in the community and bring it forward.

**M. Oss** commented that she spoke with Chair Webb and the Clerk following the last meeting and decided not to resign, but she stated that the FDC needs to be a safe place to vocalize about issues without being shamed. She stated she is grateful the FDC discussed the high school issue and the DEI topic, and she thanked H. Butler and K. Blackburn. She stated that she will not stop standing up for people or raising issues regarding marginalized individuals.

**K. Blackburn** admired M. Oss's passion for standing up for people who cannot stand up for themselves. She stated she likes that the FDC allows people to feel safe in raising issues, and she indicated that it had been a good meeting. She expressed her feeling, as a woman of color and with everything going on, that things may not get better anytime soon. She stated that she wants to make Fairbanks a better place.

**H. Butler** spoke to his involvement in various Native American movements and organizations over the years. He stated that Peter Matthiessen wrote a book titled, "In the Spirit of Crazy Horse" which chronicles the story of a friend of his, Leonard Peltier, who was wrongfully imprisoned for nearly 50 years. He shared that in 2024, President Biden went to Phoenix, AZ and apologized to Native Americans for the treatment they received in institutions for hundreds of years. **H. Butler** shared that he experienced such treatment in such an institution himself when he was younger. He shared that the President of the National Congress of American Indians was invited to fly on Air Force One with the President, where President Biden learned about Leonard Peltier's false imprisonment. **H. Butler** stated that President Biden signed a commutation to free L. Peltier on February 18, 2025, and Peltier will be able to spend the rest of his life at home. **H. Butler** shared that at the last FDC meeting, there was commentary giving a positive review of former Mayor Matherly's chairmanship of the FDC. He stated that it was Matherly's treatment of him and another FDC member that caused him to resign immediately from the FDC, and that is why he raised the

issue of Mayor Pruhs' attendance at FDC meetings. Finally, **H. Butler** shared about the writeup on Wikipedia about DEI, which indicates that DEI is a bad subject in the military. He pointed out that Fairbanks is a military town, and the Fairbanks community experiences an influx of people from all walks of life, some who disregard DEI. He stated that the FDC needs to be aware of that and remain focused. He added that he is a military veteran.

**J. Rogers** appreciated the FDC's discussion and commended both H. Butler and M. Oss for bringing impassioned understanding to the issues they raise. She stated that awareness is important and that people should be considerate, concerned, and caring for others in the community. She stated that it is difficult for anyone to talk about life experiences going back generations without receiving empathy from others.

**M. Oss** asked whether the FDC would host a table at the Festival of Native Arts February 27 through March 1. **K. Blackburn** supported the idea. **J. Rogers** stated that she would be out of town during that time. **Chair Webb** stated that she would look into what needs to be done to host a table and would be in contact with Clerk Snider. **M. Oss** and **H. Butler** volunteered to participate.

**Chair Webb** expressed excitement for the FDC's discussion. She stated she believes that the FDC is coming into its own with its discussions and various events, and she thanked fellow members.

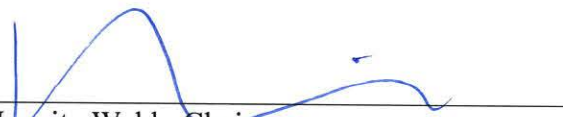
**M. Oss** requested a moment of silence honoring a police officer who recently passed away in Fairbanks (retired Fairbanks Police Department Officer Stewart Lewis). Members took a moment of silence at the direction of Chair Webb.

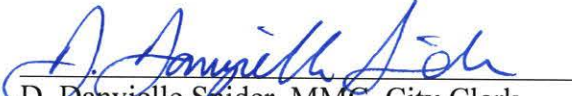
### MEETING DATES

- a) Next Regular Meeting Date, March 11, 2025

### ADJOURNMENT

**Chair Webb** declared the meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

  
Juanita Webb, Chair

  
D. Danyielle Snider, MMC, City Clerk

Transcribed by: DS