



FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, JUNE 23, 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 City Council Chambers 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
 Margarita Bell, Chief Financial Officer
 Jake Merritt, Human Resources Director (remotely)
 Ron Dupee, Police Chief
 Richard Sweet, Deputy Police Chief
 Nathan Werner, Police Captain
 Andrew Cocco, Fire Chief
 Kristi Merideth, FECC Manager (remotely)
 Teal Soden, Public Information Officer
 Jeremiah Cotter, Public Works Director
 Robert Pristash, City Engineer
 Brynn Butler, Housing Coordinator (remotely)

INVOCATION

The invocation was given by City Clerk Danyielle Snider.

FLAG SALUTATION

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

CEREMONIAL MATTERS

Police Chief Ron Dupee introduced Officer Matthew Pugh, a recent lateral transfer to the Fairbanks Police Department. Deputy Police Chief Richard Sweet administered the oath of office.

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.]

Charity Gadapee, Director of Visitor and Community Engagement for Explore Fairbanks – C. Gadapee provided an update on visitation to the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center as well as Explore Fairbanks' community engagement efforts for the summer thus far.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if Explore Fairbanks receives any feedback from visitors that would be useful for the Council to hear. C. Gadapee shared that many businesses downtown close on Sundays and Mondays, which creates a shortage of activity and dining options for visitors.

Tammie Wilson – T. Wilson stated that while she serves on the Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) Assembly, she was there to speak her own behalf. She provided a history of the Borough's hotel/motel tax and the current proposal to increase the rate from 8 to 12%. She discussed the need for revenue to support facilities used by both visitors and locals and the options that have been considered.

Mr. Cleworth asked if the increase would fall under the Borough's tax cap. T. Wilson stated that it would and that the intent was to reduce the burden on property taxpayers. **Mr. Cleworth** asked if that meant the increased tax would directly reduce property taxes. T. Wilson stated it would.

Mayor Pruhs pointed out that the City Council requires a unanimous vote for something like a tax increase to be placed on the City ballot and asked about the Assembly's requirement. T. Wilson stated she believes only a majority vote is required. **Mayor Pruhs** asked when the increase would go into effect, if approved. T. Wilson indicated that while January 1, 2026 would be ideal, the Borough may need to hire someone to manage the over new 160 new accounts it would be collecting from, so thus July 2026 may be a more realistic date.

Ms. Sprinkle asked why there would not be exemptions for rentals within the city. T. Wilson explained that no matter where someone stays, they are using the same facilities in the community. She pointed out that the Borough does not have entrance fees for its facilities like other places do.

Mr. Cleworth explained that any bed tax revenue exceeding a certain amount falls outside the City's tax cap. He asked what types of parameters are in place for the Borough's tax. T. Wilson provided an explanation of the structure, allowance, and constraints of their bed tax system. **Mr. Cleworth** asked if there is anything that designates a use for the 4% increase in funds. T. Wilson indicated there is not, although she could not guarantee the ordinance would not change.

Mr. Marney recounted that the last time the City increased the tobacco tax, the Borough followed suit, which resulted in local businesses seeing the combined tax rate jump from 16% to 40%. He admitted that this had left a bad taste in his mouth and asked why businesses and customers within the city should take a double hit. T. Wilson noted that she was not on the Assembly at that time and acknowledged that the City had been told that the tax was not stacked when it actually was. She reiterated that the Borough has responsibilities and obligations over Parks and Recreation

matters and that visitors enjoy Borough facilities regardless of where they stay. She their past experience and research showed that trying to collect user fees costs more to oversee than the revenue it generates. **Mr. Marney** asked if there are concrete numbers on the issue. T. Wilson replied that the information was according to the former Borough Mayor who had looked into it. **Mr. Marney** expressed disagreement with city residents seeing an increase in any taxes from the borough level. T. Wilson pointed out that the increase would actually lower the mill rate for all property owners, including those within the city. **Mr. Marney** asked if that was confirmed. T. Wilson stated it was, as long as the tax cap remains in place. She noted that the mill rate is already set for the current year, so the reduction would come the following year, if the ordinance passes.

Mayor Pruhs stated that he appreciated the effort to seek revenue from other sources besides residents. He discussed how the City would rather see that extra 4% go towards reinvestment in a structure or other component related to the visitor industry and that this change would eliminate that option. He asked if the Borough has considered other taxes such a rental car tax. T. Wilson confirmed they had begun to look into that option but pointed out that the bed tax rate had not been raised since 1992. **Mayor Pruhs** thanked T. Wilson for coming to have the discussion.

David van den Berg, Executive Director of Downtown Association of Fairbanks – D. van den Berg discussed the annual Midnight Sun Festival that occurred over the previous weekend. He shared details about the experience and success that was enjoyed at the event and expressed appreciation for all the things the City and Borough are doing to support and invest in the downtown area.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if the event foot traffic seemed to be more or less than in past years. D. van den Berg stated that it is difficult to tell once it gets very busy. He noted that downtown was absolutely packed from 2:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. and pretty full during the other hours.

Ms. Tidwell recalled a past discussion about creating additional outdoor public space in a certain section of downtown and asked if that was still being considered. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that it was and that the property is City-owned, along Turner Street.

Ms. Sprinkle reported that she noticed two law enforcement officers doing foot patrol during the event. D. van den Berg thanked the Council for its support.

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA

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

Ms. Sprinkle pulled item 12(c), Ordinance No. 6317, from the consent agenda.

Mr. Marney pulled item 12(b), Ordinance No. 6316, 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 renewal:

Lic. #	DBA	License Type	Licensee	Address
3020	American Legion Post #57	Club	American Legion Post #57	1634 Cushman Street

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

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

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

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

MAYOR'S COMMENTS AND REPORT

Mayor Pruhs discussed the busy past weekend and declared that nowhere in America celebrates the Summer Solstice like Fairbanks does. He shared details about the Storefront Improvement Program and the applicants who will be awarded grants, noting that \$58,000 remained. He stated he remaining funds may be used for a second round. He reported that the \$250,000 investment by the City had resulted in plans for over \$600,000 in improvements by downtown businesses; he added that the City intends to expand the eligibility area in 2026. He stated that the Midnight Sun Festival was exceptional and pointed out that the "Portland Loo" public restroom was in operation.

Ms. Therrien noted that one of the grant recipients was on the same block as the Polaris Building and asked if the entire block would be taken over once the building is demolished. **Mayor Pruhs** explained that there are two other property owners on that block and that while the City is not seeking to purchase those properties, potential developers considering a full-block project may.

COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. Ringstad and **Mr. Marney** each indicated they had no comments.

Ms. Tidwell echoed sentiments that solstice festivities are a wonderful example of the community.

Mr. Cleworth thanked various City Hall staff for helping facilitate a class reunion tour, noting that the highlight for attendees was seeing the two classrooms that were restored thanks to grant

funding several years prior. He agreed that the solstice event was a great success and congratulated D. van den Berg and organizer Olivia Rodriguez. He noted that the layout is helpful for businesses.

Ms. Therrien gave a land acknowledgement. She asked if the Mayor had had a meeting with leaders of any of the local Alaska Native organizations. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that he has one scheduled for the coming Friday. **Ms. Therrien** asked if the Council was invited to participate. **Mayor Pruhs** indicated that it would be a private meeting and that the last time one took place with Councilmembers present, the groups did not meet again for a full year. He gave details on other similar meetings that are scheduled and committed to providing a report as they occur. **Ms. Therrien** shared that she, too, had a great time participating in solstice events.

Ms. Sprinkle shared positivity about her experiences during the solstice weekend and about the conversations she had with out-of-state visitors. She asked if the downtown foot patrol had been expanded. **Mayor Pruhs** confirmed that there is a larger coverage area, including the Post Office.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a) Ordinance No. 6315 – An Ordinance Amending the 2025 Operating and Capital Budgets for the Second Time. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

Mr. Ringstad, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6315.

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

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6315 by substituting the amended, proposed version.

Chief Financial Officer Margarita Bell gave a summary of the primary changes in the proposed substitute: a transfer of \$3MM to the Risk Fund, a \$400,000 increase to the Golden Heart Plaza (GHP) landscape project, and a reallocation of \$112,000 in road maintenance projects.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6315 BY SUBSTITUTING THE AMENDED, PROPOSED VERSION AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Tidwell, Marney, Cleworth, Pruhs

NAYS: Ringstad, Therrien, Sprinkle

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

Mayor Pruhs asked City Engineer Bob Pristash to provide further details regarding the request for increased funds. B. Pristash discussed six projects and the need for contingency funds in the amount of 15-20%, which amounted to \$200,000.

Ms. Tidwell asked if that was in addition to the \$112,000 shown in the proposed substitute. CFO Bell confirmed that was correct but clarified that the \$112,000 is a reallocation from another project.

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6315, as Amended, by increasing the road maintenance contingency funding by \$200,000.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6315, AS AMENDED, BY INCREASING THE ROAD MAINTENANCE CONTINGENCY FUNDING BY \$200,000 AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

Ms. Sprinkle expressed concern with the \$400,000 increase to the GHP project which was only recently shown to the Council; she added that it came as a surprise. She shared that she recently visited the Plaza to get a visual and is distressed with the overall amount, given that the Council already approved \$175,000 for the project. She stated that she would like to stick with the initial scope of landscaping and give more time to consider the larger project for 2026.

Mayor Pruhs discussed the project's evolution from initial concept to design, then to engineering estimates. He reported that when he saw that the overall scope had increased significantly, he denied a change order request and directed that the increased funding request go before the Council in a budget amendment. He distributed photos of the area, dated from the mid-1950s, and discussed how certain property was neglected for decades after the GHP was constructed. **Mayor Pruhs** asked if there was a "right" thing to do with the property and admitted that he did not have the answer to that question. He pointed out that the City has \$6MM unencumbered in the Capital Projects Fund out of the original \$12MM. He asked why there would be any objection to moving forward now since the Council knows work will be done on the property eventually.

Ms. Sprinkle stated the initial project only included landscaping improvements but had expanded to a much larger-scale project without input from the Council. **Mayor Pruhs** asserted that the Council had been brought into the conversation at the last work session. **Ms. Sprinkle** pointed out that the work session was only six days prior, and the Council is now being asked to approve a large increase. She stated she would like to see the project divided into phases, as was proposed, and stated there should be no rush to renovate a property that has been neglected for over 50 years.

B. Pristash explained that the first phase would include clearing the area around the riverbank, installing a foundation, and other concrete and electrical work. CFO Bell provided totals for what had already been spent or encumbered and an estimate for what would be needed to complete phase one as described by B. Pristash.

Ms. Therrien asked for clarification on how much would be needed to complete the first phase. CFO Bell stated that \$86,150 would be needed.

Ms. Sprinkle stated that she would like to avoid anything related to the signage at this point in the process. B. Pristash explained that the electrical work being done is minor and is in preparation for other things that may come later. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked B. Pristash if it would be a problem to only proceed with the first phase and let things sit until 2026. B. Pristash confirmed that would be fine.

Ms. Tidwell asked if they would be locked into the same design that was presented if the Council approved funding to complete only phase one. **B. Pristash** stated that it would more or less be a commitment, as the initial work is to set up the future phases as presented, though there could be some adjustments. **Ms. Tidwell** asked if the concrete would be the type that must be cleared by hand when it snows. **B. Pristash** indicated that it would not be the same orange tile surface that exists in the main plaza. He added that they would not be able to drive in with a skid steer but smaller snow clearing equipment would be able to access the area.

Ms. Sprinkle spoke against the idea of hundreds of thousands of dollars being used to for signage that will block the view of the river. She stated she is at a loss as to how the Council is suddenly in a situation where a big decision must be made on things that do not feel thought out.

Mr. Ringstad agreed that the project is a whole new concept that, for the Council, is only six days old. He discussed how other capital projects get approved only to have requests for large funding increases after they commence. He expressed his desire to have a better understanding of what is being undertaken from the start of a project. He stated that he would rather take time and make sure the Council is comfortable with the project before moving forward beyond phase one.

Mr. Marney asked if the Council could hold off and have more discussion on the project later.

Mayor Pruhs suggested the Council fund the first phase and proceed to garner feedback from the community on the overall plan. He reported that he has \$150,000 left in his reserve account which can be used to cover any overages in the first phase. He suggested that after the initial phase the City could get firmer estimates on the remaining work. **Mayor Pruhs** shared that the Alaska Native organizations he had spoken with have expressed support for the project. He claimed that everyone who had seen the concept seems to like it except **Ms. Sprinkle**, which is okay.

Ms. Therrien asked how much it would cost just to clear the shrubs and trees in the targeted area. She noted that anything including concrete and electrical work does not seem to be supported by several Councilmembers. **B. Pristash** explained that the first phase must include concrete and electrical work as it sets the foundation for the remaining project. He stated that simply clearing vegetation would cost much less but also would not serve much purpose. **Ms. Therrien** reiterated that there did not appear to be a consensus on moving forward with steps that would inherently obligate the City to the current project design. **Mayor Pruhs** reminded the Council that he had proposed a solution to cover the additional cost for the first phase from his own reserves.

Ms. Tidwell acknowledged the present disagreements but noted that everyone wants to have the best possible Plaza along the river downtown.

Ms. Tidwell, seconded by **Ms. Therrien**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6315, as Amended, by removing the \$400,000 increase for the GHP landscaping project.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if the Council could add the funds back in the near future if the increase were removed now. **CFO Bell** stated that the Council can request a budget amendment at any time. **B. Pristash** reported that a designer was under contract to produce a completed design but had been

directed to hold off on final touches until after the present Council meeting in order to receive any additional input. He stated that the designer would be completing and submitting a final design.

Mr. Ringstad suggested the City still move forward with some work to prepare the property as it was nearly July and it would be nice to make some progress in 2025.

Ms. Tidwell agreed that she wants to move forward but does not want to be locked into a design if that is where the disagreement lies. She explained that by taking out the funding increase, she hopes the Council could discuss the project at the next work session, rather than drag it out for months. She added that if they agree on a design, the funding request could be brought back.

Mr. Ringstad asked if setting back the funding authorization by a few weeks would result in the project not being feasible in 2025. B. Pristash stated that they would still be able to proceed as the concrete work could be done well into October.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6315, AS AMENDED, BY REMOVING THE \$400,000 INCREASE FOR THE GHP LANDSCAPING PROJECT AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Marney, Ringstad, Tidwell, Therrien, Sprinkle

NAYS: Cleworth

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6315, as Amended, by striking the \$3MM transfer to the Risk Fund.

Ms. Therrien acknowledged that the Council had agreed to cover the first \$3MM payment for the recent settlement. She asked if the funds could come from elsewhere instead of the General Fund. CFO Bell indicated that the only other option would be to increase the mill levy the following year.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6315, AS AMENDED, BY STRIKING THE \$3MM TRANSFER TO THE RISK FUND AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Therrien

NAYS: Marney, Sprinkle, Ringstad, Tidwell, Cleworth

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION FAILED.

Mr. Cleworth shared his concern with the cost of renovating the Fire Training Center. He noted the proposed increase in the project's funding and asked if that would be enough. Chief of Staff Sanders stated that even with the added funding, the building will not be pretty. He explained that it is difficult to renovate a 1980s building that had been long neglected. He asserted that the facility would be functional soon and could serve as a training location, although it would not be ready as a backup dispatch center. He recounted that, from the beginning, he shared that it would be an expensive project spanning multiple years. He apologized for not having any grants to subsidize costs, noting that one grant went away with federal administration changes.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if the work being done will make the facilities more viable for rental. M. Sanders stated that it would make the building more viable for anything, whereas previously it was in bad enough shape that it could be considered a blighted property. He indicated that the plan is to have computers and other systems in place to make it a modern, useful facility.

Mr. Ringstad asked how much had been spent on the facility. CFO Bell reported that \$680,000 had been spent. **Mr. Ringstad** noted that with the proposed increase, it would total over \$1.2MM.

Mr. Cleworth expressed concern over the dwindling balance of the Capital Fund and the need for the City to have emergency funds should vital equipment unexpectedly fail. He stated that \$5MM should be the minimum balance and indicated that he would be drafting an ordinance to that effect. He discussed challenges with the Fire Training Center project and acknowledged M. Sanders' work to turn a neglected asset into something useful again. **Mr. Cleworth** noted that the building's original purpose to serve as a training center for all local fire departments was admirable but that it had cost the City millions of dollars over the years. He admitted reaching the point a while back where he was ready to cut and run, preferring to see the property sold.

Mr. Ringstad stated that he was expecting the project to be only a few hundred thousand dollars.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6315, AS AMENDED, AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Cleworth, Marney, Ringstad, Sprinkle, Tidwell

NAYS: Therrien

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6315, as Amended, ADOPTED.

NEW BUSINESS

- a) Resolution No. 5178 – A Resolution Authorizing Payment to Alaska Public Risk Alliance (APRA) for Municipal Insurance Coverage. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs..

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- b) Ordinance No. 6316 – An Ordinance Establishing a Paramedic Recruitment Bonus Program. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

Mr. Marney, seconded by **Ms. Therrien**, moved to ADVANCE Ordinance No. 6316.

Mr. Cleworth asked if Fire Chief Andrew Coccaro could provide a staffing summary by the next meeting that included training credentials for the various positions in the department.

Ms. Sprinkle asked for details on why the bonus program was being initiated. Chief Coccaro explained that while the City does well with recruitment for firefighters, it struggles to attract certified paramedics. He noted that while there are many paramedics at the Fairbanks Fire Department (FFD), many of them have been promoted above the firefighter rank, leaving a gap

across the ambulance crews. He discussed the City's success in recruitment incentives for police officers and dispatchers, suggesting that the bonus would help cast a wider net for firefighters already certified as paramedics rather than spending a year or two to train existing staff.

Ms. Therrien asked how many paramedic firefighters FFD currently lacks. Chief Cocco stated that they need four or five in the next academy group to balance out departmental needs. **Ms. Therrien** asked that funding details for the bonuses be provided by the next meeting.

Mr. Ringstad posed a hypothetical scenario where the salary savings being used to fund the bonuses runs out while offers have been extended; he questioned the City's risk in such a scenario. City Attorney Chard stated that he had asked a similar question when the recruitment incentive program was being proposed for the police department. He explained that the CFO keeps a watchful eye on salary savings and works with department heads to ensure commitments are not being made that the City cannot fulfill. He noted that the language of the FFD bonus states that it will be available so long as the funds exist, that it has a sunset date for the end of 2025, and that there should not be a problem with the funding source. **Mr. Ringstad** pointed out that salary savings may not exist when it is time to pay any latter portions of the bonus.

Mr. Marney stated that he was not aware that FFD had any salary savings. Chief Cocco pointed out that the department recently went for a long period with a few key positions vacant. **Mr. Marney** asked what qualifications existed among the recent group of recruits. Chief Cocco shared that the entry level status, upon completion of training, is Firefighter 1 and Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) 1. He reported that all of the new recruits in the recent class are at that or a higher EMT level, but none are certified paramedics. **Mr. Marney** asked if it would behoove the Council to wait until the firefighter arbitration was over before making decisions to commit funds. Chief Cocco stated that the arbitration will still take some time, and he hopes to get recruitment underway as soon as possible, taking advantage of the salary savings and continuing to work towards reducing FFD overtime. He mentioned the standard obligation for repayment if the employee who received the bonus leaves employment before an established timeframe.

Attorney Chard noted that there is currently enough funding in salary savings to cover the initial bonuses but suggested that CFO Bell could best explain funding feasibility in future years. CFO Bell assured the Council that funds will be available in future years as the process is to encumber the full amount of any potential bonus as a liability. She pointed out that the recent audit verified a current liability of \$160,000, which represents future bonus payments that have been committed.

Ms. Tidwell suggested that it was a good program if the alternative to a \$20,000 bonus is spending \$120,000 to train recruits as paramedics. She asked if the bonus would be sufficient to recruit someone to Fairbanks. She pointed out that the commitment is only for three years and reminded the Council of past discussions regarding retention being the primary staffing challenge at FFD. She admitted that she was skeptical that the bonus program would help with retention but that she would like to hear more about any long-term strategies being considered.

Chief Cocco acknowledged the retention concerns and explained that if the next group of recruits does not include any paramedics, the City may spend a lot to get them trained, including more overtime to cover their position while they are gone, only to see them leave for another agency.

He explained that it is hard to retain paramedics in general, and while \$20,000 may not be sufficient to entice someone, he understands that the amount already sounds large to many Councilmembers. He pointed out that there are many potential recruits already interested in moving to Alaska, so FFD's goal is to give those on the fence a final push to get them here. He stated the City can provide a good employment package and he hopes to nourish the department culture to make them want to stay. Chief Cocco added that FFD is a very progressive department when it comes to what paramedics are expected, allowed, and encouraged to do in their scope of work, which is attractive to those currently working for more restrictive agencies. He admitted that the bonus may not be part of a permanent solution, but people will never stay at FFD if they do not get hired first.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if the vacant positions are part of the nine that were added for 2025. Chief Cocco explained that the latest academy group filled five of the nine spots, and he is targeting paramedics for the next round of recruitment to fill the remaining spots. He stated that if they are unsuccessful in recruiting paramedics with the bonus, he will bring a different proposal for 2026. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked if paramedics are necessary. Chief Cocco declared they are 100% necessary, and lives are saved because the City has licensed paramedics running ambulances every day.

Mr. Cleworth asked what level is considered "advanced" for medical training. Chief Cocco stated that an advanced medical certification is that of an EMT 3 or higher. **Mr. Cleworth** asked why certified paramedics can no longer be used as such once they are promoted. Chief Cocco explained that it would be very costly to schedule an overtime shift for a higher-level position to fill a spot on an ambulance that should be staffed by a firefighter/paramedic. He added that many FFD personnel with paramedic licenses have been promoted internally, and the City has lost the recruitment battle with other agencies to attract new certified paramedics, so there is a gap to fill.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADVANCE ORDINANCE NO. 6316 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Sprinkle, Ringstad, Marney, Tidwell, Therrien

NAYS: Cleworth

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6316 ADVANCED.

- c) Ordinance No. 6317 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Chapter 22 Elections. Introduced by Councilmember Cleworth.

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Therrien**, moved to ADVANCE Ordinance No. 6317.

Ms. Sprinkle asked for more information on how the ordinance came to be.

Mr. Cleworth reported that Clerk Snider had done nearly all the work to prepare the ordinance and address numerous items that warranted Code updates regarding elections. He encouraged the Council to take the time to read it before the next work session where questions could be answered.

Ms. Therrien asked if the Council would have enough time to go through the ordinance with the attention it deserved. **Mayor Pruhs** pointed out that the item had been introduced, and the Council

could advance it or even postpone if that is preferred. Clerk Snider noted that due to the calendar, there is an extra week before the next work session. **Ms. Therrien** stated that when it is time to vote for adoption, the Council should postpone the ordinance if members feel they have not had enough time to discuss all the changes.

Attorney Chard acknowledged the Council's prerogative to postpone but advised that the Council be mindful of election season timing and avoid making changes late in the year.

Clerk Snider explained that the ordinance was an effort to standardize language, clean up terminology, and improve consistency with current practices and the Borough's election code. She noted that the most substantive change was one Mr. Cleworth proposed, to add a requirement that witnesses signing an absentee ballot also print their name. She stated that a printed name is currently requested but not required by Code. She reported that the ordinance had not been brought forward sooner because the Borough had recently considered an ordinance to amend its election code which could have impacted the City's election code. She pointed out that if the ordinance remains on track for adoption at the next meeting, it would be just prior to the opening of the candidate filing period on July 15.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADVANCE ORDINANCE NO. 6317 AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6317 ADVANCED.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TO THE CITY COUNCIL

- a) Appointments to the Fairbanks Diversity Council

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Ms. Tidwell indicated she had no reports or comments.

Mr. Marney shared that he attended the Midnight Sun Festival with his wife and, while he does not enjoy large crowds, it is amazing what the event does for the community.

Mr. Ringstad indicated he had no reports or comments.

Ms. Sprinkle suggested the City hold a public contest to name the Portland Loo. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that he had already named it the "Buberge Bathroom."

Ms. Therrien asked for a report on the firefighter contract arbitration. **Mayor Pruhs** noted that the only people who are in the know are the attorneys and the other party. He confirmed that the

arbitration lasted five days. **Ms. Therrien** asked when the Council might hear an update. Attorney Chard stated that he would anticipate a decision in mid-August.

Mr. Cleworth asked whether an arbitration is open to the public like negotiations are. Attorney Chard explained that the arbitrator sets the parameters for what is allowed in the process, and they will usually ask both parties their preferences. He noted that in some cases, parties will request closed hearings but in some they allow others to be present. **Ms. Therrien** asked what was agreed to in this case. Attorney Chard indicated that as the Mayor had suggested, it would be best to wait until the results were publicly announced. He shared that the staff who participated [Mayor, Chief of Staff, and CFO] were extremely knowledgeable and effective in representing the City. **Mr. Cleworth** asked if the press was included. Attorney Chard replied that they were not but that one Councilmember had asked to observe, and the arbitrator and both parties agreed to allow it.

CITY CLERK'S REPORT

Clerk Snider shared details about a contest for local K-12 students to submit a design for a new "I Voted" sticker, which would be voted on by a group of the local Mayors and select members of each City Council and the Borough Assembly.

CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Attorney Chard expressed appreciation for the Council's commitment to serving the community.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mayor Pruhs called for objection and, hearing none, so ORDERED.

Mayor Pruhs declared the meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.



DAVID PRUHS, MAYOR

ATTEST:



D. DANYIELLE SNIDER, MMC, CITY CLERK

Transcribed by: CC