



FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, MAY 19, 2025
FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
800 CUSHMAN STREET, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

The City Council convened at 6:30 p.m. on the above date to conduct a Regular Meeting of the Fairbanks City Council via Zoom webinar and in the City Council Chambers 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: Thomas Chard, City Attorney
 Michael Sanders, Chief of Staff
 Colt Chase, Deputy City Clerk
 Andrew Coccaro, Fire Chief
 Jeremiah Cotter, Public Works Director
 Kristi Merideth, FECC Manager (remotely)
 Teal Soden, Public Information Officer (remotely)

INVOCATION

The invocation was given by Deputy City Clerk Colt Chase.

FLAG SALUTATION

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

CITIZENS' COMMENTS

[Clerk Note: Names of citizens who provide comments may not be spelled correctly if their name was illegible on the physical sign-up sheet.]

Sharon McConnell, Executive Director of Denakkanaaga, Inc. – S. McConnell spoke in favor of the land acknowledgment proposed by Ordinance No. 6314. She shared that Denakkanaaga, with the help of several Elders, drafted the land acknowledgment posted outside of Council Chambers several years prior. She expressed appreciation that the acknowledgement is displayed for all to see but also expressed disappointment that the legislation at that time did not pass and, as a result, the land acknowledgement is not read at Council meetings. She discussed the significance of land

acknowledgements and the opportunity to recognize the original inhabitants and stewards of the land. She declared that the ordinance before the Council has good intent and is a move in the right direction. S. McConnell discussed the “Caps for Cops” program where police officers are taught how to create their own beaver hats which can be worn on duty. She highlighted the benefits of the program, including the connections and understanding it creates between law enforcement and the Alaska Native community. She stated that the Police Chief and Deputy Police Chief have both taken time to meet with Elders, which has created meaningful experiences for all involved. She reiterated the importance of all community leaders coming together to discuss making their home as good as it can be. She urged the Council to move forward adopt the land acknowledgement.

Mr. Marney asked S. McConnell if she was aware that the Fairbanks Diversity Council (FDC) includes a land acknowledgement at the beginning of each of its meetings. S. McConnell reported that they had met with the FDC about two years prior and learned that they wanted to change the land acknowledgement, which Denakkanaaga opposed. She asserted that reading the land acknowledgement before FDC meetings does not hold the same significance as doing so before Council meetings.

Ms. Sprinkle asked S. McConnell if she had read the acknowledgement being proposed by the ordinance. S. McConnell indicated that she had not. She stated that posting it outside of Council Chambers was a step in the right direction, but it would mean much more if it was read at the start of Council meetings. She pointed out that the Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly and other local organizations already follow the practice. **Ms. Sprinkle** clarified that she wanted to make sure that the proposed language was acceptable. S. McConnell confirmed that she had not yet read the proposed language.

Glenn Carlo – G. Carlo shared that he moved to Fairbanks in 1957 and grew up selling newspapers on the streets. He stated that he experienced prejudice all throughout school but clarified that he was not at the meeting to complain about that. He stated that the prejudice was motivation to push himself to be better and work harder, which led to some wonderful job opportunities over the years. He spoke in favor of the land acknowledgement and its message to honor those who have taken care of the land. He encouraged the Council to adopt Ordinance No. 6314.

Anthony Mosinski, Director of Fairbanks Integrated Community Services (FICS) – A. Mosinski provided an update on the Emergency Services Patrol (ESP), for which his organization was awarded the contract the previous month. He reported that FICS has worked closely with the City to get set up and that in their 11 days since operations began, they have had 32 events involving 22 unique individuals. He discussed some successes as well as challenges they have encountered.

Mayor Pruhs asked A. Mosinski if he was aware that the Borough Assembly approved a budget that included funding for the expansion of the ESP. A. Mosinski indicated that he was not familiar with any details of such. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that before he determines whether or not to accept the funds, he would like to meet with A. Mosinski to discuss the feasibility of expanding.

Ms. Sprinkle asked for more details on the makeup of FICS staff. A. Mosinski shared that they seek employees who can utilize both professional training as well as peer-to-peer, lived experience. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked if the 32 events they have participated in have been dispatched calls or those

they have encountered through making rounds. A. Mosinski stated that their encounters have been fairly equal from both sources. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked how often people refuse service. A. Mosinski indicated that about 10% of encounters have involved an individual declining interaction with them, which is lower than they expected. He shared that they will sometimes give a little time then come back to check on the person to see if they have changed their mind about accepting help.

Ms. Therrien referenced the \$325,000 budgeted by the Borough Assembly to help expand the ESP and asked how FICS is doing with hiring more personnel. A. Mosinski provided a report on their recruitment efforts and incoming staff.

Ms. Tidwell asked about their hours of service. A. Mosinski stated that they are currently operating eight hours a day and have been adjusting accordingly on the basis of when the detox center is taking admissions. He explained it has typically been from about noon – 8:00 p.m. but can run as late as midnight. He added that they still want to collect data to help inform future plans, so calls outside of those hours are welcome.

Mr. Ringstad spoke of the Borough's funding and asked if that will make a difference in the evolution of the program. A. Mosinski concurred that it was hopeful news but reiterated that he is unsure at this time what terms are attached to the funds. **Mr. Ringstad** expressed appreciation for the report and requested future updates.

Steve Ginnis – S. Ginnis shared that he has lived in Fairbanks for 26 years, and he is currently the Traditional Chief with the Gwichyaa Zhee Gwich'in Tribal Government serving the people of Fort Yukon, Alaska. He added that he also served for 15 years as the Executive Director of Fairbanks Native Association, as the President of Tanana Chiefs Conference, and as the CEO of the Interior Regional Housing Authority. He declared that the land acknowledgement proposal is not a political issue but simply recognition of the first peoples that occupied the area. He discussed the historical record of the Chena River Village, whose people were pushed out of the area when the gold rush occurred in the Fairbanks region. S. Ginnis shared that his title is not one simply given; rather, it is earned by understanding his people's language, culture, and history. He explained that his job is to help his people keep that focus, remembering that they were the first inhabitants of the area. He stated that he does not see the issue for those unwilling to support a land acknowledgement.

Ms. Therrien asked S. Ginnis if he had read the proposed land acknowledgement and if he felt it was appropriate. S. Ginnis stated that he has and that it is. He echoed the view of S. McConnell that reading it at City Council meetings carries more weight than doing so at FDC meetings.

Victor Buberger – V. Buberger thanked the Public Works Department for its work in dealing with potholes around the city. He asked for more information about the orange signs advertising businesses in the downtown area and whether he can purchase one for his family member.

Brenda Krupa – B. Krupa noted many familiar faces in the room and spoke about the two halves of her culture, a mix of Alaskan Native and Dutch family, backgrounds, and spirituality. She shared how those spiritualties have been handed down for generations and continue to this day. She discussed land acknowledgements as another form of respect and spoke in support of Ordinance

No. 6314. B. Krupa indicated that she had read the text and felt it was appropriate. She shared her history with her grandparents' cabin downtown in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA

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

Mayor Pruhs pulled item 12(a), Ordinance No. 6314, from the consent agenda.

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

Deputy Clerk Chase read the consent agenda, as amended, into the record.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

a) Regular Meeting Minutes of April 28, 2025

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

MAYOR'S COMMENTS AND REPORT

Mayor Pruhs responded to V. Buberger's question regarding the orange signs downtown by explaining that they are part of a temporary construction easement agreement between the City and property owners in the immediate vicinity of the Polaris Building during its demolition. He praised the recent clean-up event at the Clay Street Cemetery and shared that a ceremony will take place there on Memorial Day. He reported that the Fairbanks Rescue Mission will resume its partnership with the City for clean-up efforts in downtown Fairbanks as of June 1.

COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Ms. Therrien expressed hope that the Council would advance Ordinance No. 6314. She explained that the Council does not usually hear from the public until an ordinance reaches its second reading and public hearing.

Mr. Marney and **Ms. Tidwell** each stated that they had no comments.

Mr. Cleworth expressed appreciation for those who had testified and for the report on the ESP.

Ms. Sprinkle reported that she attended the first Downtown Market the previous week and that it was a great experience. She thanked those who helped organize the event and recognized the support from the Discretionary Fund.

Mr. Ringstad stated that he had no comments.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a) Ordinance No. 6283, as Amended – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code by Enacting Section 10-207 to Require That Vacant Buildings Be Secured and Registered and Establishing Fines for Violations of These Requirements. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs and Councilmembers Sprinkle, Ringstad, Therrien, and Marney.

Note: Ordinance No. 6283 was introduced at the Regular Meeting of June 24, 2024, and a motion to ADVANCE was made by Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by Mr. Ringstad. The ordinance was POSTPONED to the Regular Meeting of August 26, 2024, at which time it was AMENDED and POSTPONED to the December 16, 2024. At that meeting, the ordinance was POSTPONED to the May 19, 2025. The motion to ADVANCE remains on the floor.

Ms. Sprinkle stated a lot of work had been done on the ordinance and spoke in favor of adoption.

Mr. Ringstad reported that at a recent meeting of the Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce it was clear that there is widespread support for the City's efforts to improve the community, such as Ordinance No. 6283, as Amended.

Mr. Marney spoke in favor of the ordinance and the Council's efforts to clean up Fairbanks.

Mayor Pruhs noted that the Council has spent nearly a year on the ordinance and that the program is ready to be put into place. He acknowledged that it will not be easy but was hopeful that the program would increase public safety.

Mr. Cleworth stated that when the ordinance first came about, he had concerns. He complimented those who had worked to resolve those issues, such as making it easy to register vacant buildings and allowing owners to choose whether or not they will give the police permission to enter and secure their building. He discussed what he felt was the most important change, which was the ability for owners who feel that due process was not given to appeal any decisions made, all the way up to the City Council. He declared that such flexibility is vital to the program.

Ms. Therrien voiced support for the ordinance and agreed that the provision to allow police to secure buildings was important. She recounted that some Councilmembers had previously expressed concern over some of the fees but noted that they seem to be in agreement now.

Ms. Tidwell thanked Ms. Sprinkle and Mr. Ringstad for the work they did on the ordinance. She shared that many people are starting to notice the Council's efforts to clean up the downtown area and that she had received positive feedback. She requested to be added as a sponsor.

Mayor Pruhs asked Mr. Cleworth if he would also like to be added in order to show the full Council listed as sponsors. **Mr. Cleworth** consented to being added as a sponsor.

Mr. Ringstad shared that his only concern had been the daily fee of \$300 for non-compliance, which could add up to tens of thousands of dollars. He indicated that was why the right to appeal

was vital. He expressed hope that after a couple years of success and a change of mindset regarding property ownership within the city that the program would eventually be unnecessary.

Deputy Clerk Chase clarified that the motion on the floor was to advance the ordinance to a second reading and public hearing.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADVANCE ORDINANCE NO. 6283, AS AMENDED, AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and.

NEW BUSINESS

- a) Ordinance No. 6314 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Section 2-119(a), Order of Business, Requiring a Land Acknowledgment at Every Regular City Council Meeting. Introduced by Councilmembers Therrien and Tidwell.

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to ADVANCE Ordinance No. 6314.

Mr. Marney shared that he had several conversations in the last week, including one with a church group that wanted to pursue having the Lord's Prayer read at City Council meetings. He mentioned that veterans may like the Council to make a statement honoring those who served our country over the last 250 years. He recounted that he had voted against a similar proposal regarding a land acknowledgement a few years prior and how at the time he had read the beginning of Psalm 24 from the Bible, which he repeated as follows: "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters." **Mr. Marney** stated that he thinks that should be the only land acknowledgement read, if any. He asserted that the Council should remain focused on its agenda of economic development, property abatement, the recent large legal settlement, and the upcoming arbitration with the firefighters. He offered that a reading of a land acknowledgement at FDC meetings was appropriate.

Ms. Sprinkle stated that she believes discussion on the ordinance is bigger than just a land acknowledgement. She suggested that the citizens' comments earlier may be just the tip of an iceberg or a separate iceberg entirely. She spoke of the rough waters the Council has been through with various community groups and stated she wants to proceed with care and more conversation.

Mr. Ringstad voiced agreement with Mr. Marney and Ms. Sprinkle. He stated that talk is cheap and he would rather see action than words. He declared that as a governing body they should strive to treat everyone the same and not pick certain groups to highlight. He concurred that a broader conversation needs to be had and that it was great to hear about the Caps for Cops program. He stated that the Council should put time and energy into other efforts that would produce positive results, taking time to meet with all groups who call Fairbanks home. **Mr. Ringstad** spoke about the need to stay focused and added his distaste that the ordinance felt political in an election year.

Ms. Therrien suggested that not everyone wanting to speak about the ordinance may have understood that it might not advance and that those individuals likely believed that they would have the chance to testify at the following meeting. She pointed out that the testimony earlier in the meeting was supportive of the land acknowledgment and that she realizes there may be some citizens who feel differently. She reiterated that both sides should have an opportunity to speak to the Council about the ordinance and she spoke in support of advancement.

Mr. Cleworth spoke of the protocols and traditions the City Council had observed over the years regarding what would be displayed in Council Chambers and in what manner. He shared that every historical document on the walls of the room had been discussed in great detail at some point in the past. He pointed out examples throughout the room including:

- The Four Noble Truths, from Buddhist philosophy
- The Ten Commandments, from the Old Testament
- The 10 Disciplines of Hinduism
- The Bill of Rights
- The Magna Carta
- The Declaration of Independence

Mr. Cleworth noted that the most recent item to be approved was the land acknowledgement, which in addition to being potentially the most legible item on display, was also the first document visitors would see when entering Council Chambers. He suggested that while some may say it is easy to put something up on the walls, it actually is not. He shared a story of how after the Council approved the Ten Commandments for posting, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) threatened to sue the City unless they would be allowed to post something of their choice. He reported that the Council agreed to the request, and the ACLU hung a photo of Larry Flynt, whose company notably produced the pornographic magazine, *Hustler*. **Mr. Cleworth** stated that his point was to highlight how the documents on the walls of Council Chambers, and the process of approving them, hold more significance than some may realize. He asserted that the proposed ordinance mandates that one historical document should be placed above all others. He shared that he has heard many requests over the years for certain items to take priority, but the Council tries not to show favoritism while still recognizing the significance of each historical document. **Mr. Cleworth** pointed out that each Councilmember has two opportunities to provide comments on any topic they want at every regular meeting. He recounted that former Councilmember Shoshana Kun would read the land acknowledgement into the record at every meeting. He noted that Ms. Therrien continued that tradition once Ms. Kun had left the Council, and Ms. Therrien did so until October 2022 when her term ended. He pointed out that Ms. Therrien had not resumed the practice since returning to the Council but reiterated that any Councilmember has the right to do so, just as any citizen could read a land acknowledgement at any meeting during Citizens' Comments. **Mr. Cleworth** stated that he has a problem with recognizing one historical document over all others. He acknowledged that strong feelings surround the issue and suggested that, similar to the annual tradition of inviting individuals or a community group to read the Bill of Rights at a meeting every December, perhaps they could consider doing the same for the land acknowledgement.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADVANCE ORDINANCE NO. 6314 AS FOLLOWS:

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

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TO THE CITY COUNCIL

- a) Fairbanks Diversity Council Meeting Minutes of April 8, 2025

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. Ringstad reported that Chief Financial Officer Margarita Bell informed him that the Council will need to set the new mill rate within the next few weeks and that the recent legal settlement will be factored into the calculation. He requested that the Council take time in an upcoming work session to discuss the options for covering that bill. He stated he is not comfortable just sticking it to the taxpayers and moving on. **Mayor Pruhs** confirmed that the Council will discuss the topic in the very near future. **Mr. Ringstad** asserted that the cost of the settlement represents about 25% of the City's total budget, so nothing else seemed to be a higher priority.

Mr. Marney shared that he also attended the Downtown Market the previous week, and he was surprised but happy to see that the Fairbanks Police Department still managed to provide coverage for the event despite being short-staffed. He concurred with Mr. Ringstad's comments about not waiting any longer to discuss how to handle the cost of the recent settlement.

Ms. Tidwell reported that the Economic Development Commission recently met and unanimously supported the effort of the Fairbanks Economic Development Corporation (FEDC) becoming the Alaska Regional Development Organization (ARDOR) for the area. She stated that she attended the recent FEDC Board of Directors meeting and met a new member of their staff.

Mr. Cleworth shared that he also attended the Downtown Market, that it was a great event, and that he looks forward to the Midnight Sun Solstice Festival. He discussed his reluctance to be added as a sponsor to ordinances and resolutions after introduction and explained that when he does historical research, he prefers to have a clear picture of the original sponsor(s), which can be lost once everyone is added on.

Ms. Therrien reported on the Legislative Committee and gave updates on various items underway in the state capital. She noted that the legislative session was nearing its end, and some items that have not yet come to a conclusion may have to be reintroduced the following year.

Ms. Sprinkle shared that the Finance Committee would meet the coming Thursday and that the group is still exploring ways to increase City revenue by 10%. She discussed Mr. Cleworth's explanation about the historical significance of knowing the original sponsors of an ordinance or resolution, and she asked if the City Clerk or City Attorney could see if there is an appropriate way to notate such on legislative documents. She asked if there was any update on the status of the Chena River State Recreation Site [located in the northwest area of Airport Way and University

Avenue]. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that the State of Alaska still has responsibility over the location, and he has not been contacted by the Department of Natural Resources regarding any plans. **Ms. Sprinkle** indicated that she recalled hearing discussion about the possibility of the State ceding the property to the City. **Mayor Pruhs** explained that if that was to occur, based on federal funding constraints associated with the property, the City would only be permitted to operate it as a public park entity, which would be a complicated endeavor. He stated that this should not discourage any Councilmember from seeking ways to pursue the issue, considering that the property is a gem and the State is open to discussions. **Ms. Sprinkle** indicated that the City has enough on its plate at the moment, and she intends to put a pin in this topic for the future.

Mayor Pruhs stated that the Finance Committee would discuss how the City will handle the recent \$9MM settlement in its upcoming meeting. He indicated that after input is received from the Committee, CFO Bell will provide a report.

CITY CLERK'S REPORT

Deputy Clerk Chase requested a moment to confer with the City Attorney regarding the action taken on Ordinance No. 6283, as Amended. He then confirmed that the motion to advance to a second reading and public hearing was correct. [Note: For clarity, these minutes, under the associated agenda item, include a more detailed description of the actions taken on Ordinance No. 6283, as Amended, since introduction.] He stated that he had nothing to report.

CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Attorney Chard stated that he had nothing to report.

ADJOURNMENT

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

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

Mayor Pruhs declared the meeting adjourned at 7:37 p.m.



DAVID PRUHS, MAYOR

ATTEST:



D. DANYELLE SMIDER, MMC, CITY CLERK

Transcribed by: CC