



FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, DECEMBER 2, 2024
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. Work Session to discuss Code requirements for Room Rental Tax distributions, 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
 Margarita Bell, Chief Financial Officer (CFO)
 Jake Merritt, Human Resources Director (remotely)
 Jeremiah Cotter, Public Works Director
 Andrew Cocco, Fire Chief
 Ron Dupee, Police Chief
 Richard Sweet, Deputy Police Chief
 Robert Pristash, City Engineer
 Brynn Butler, Housing Coordinator (remotely)
 Marsha Oss, Reentry Coordinator (remotely)

INVOCATION

The invocation was given by City Clerk Danyielle Snider.

FLAG SALUTATION

At the request of Mayor Pruhs, **Mr. Cleworth** 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.]

Vivian Stiver – V. Stiver voiced support for Resolution No. 5147 and the improvement of drainage around the Senior Center. She stated that it does not take much for an aging senior to feel barriers to access and that this effort will make a big difference. She thanked the Council for publishing its legislative priorities, specifically the effort to secure funds to replace the siding on the Senior Center. She shared that affordable housing for the senior community has been one of her passions for a long time and that upcoming renovations would put the building in great shape for decades.

Scott Austin – S. Austin stated that he spoke at a Council meeting a couple months prior to address what he believed to be an unjust parking ticket and appeal process. He attempted to play an audio recording of that interaction, noting that he was told that if he reached out to the Mayor's Office, he would be taken care of. He alleged that he did as instructed but was never contacted. He added that he sent a message through the City's website but again got no response. S. Austin reported that he received an email from the Chief of Staff indicating that they would not grant his request to refund the \$43 ticket because they had a photo of his car parked illegally. He asserted that he had personally measured the distance in question and determined that there was a problem with the citation. He asked if the Mayor was a liar. **Mayor Pruhs** replied that the Council was not there to take questions from the public but rather to listen, noting that Mr. Austin still had one minute remaining to speak if he wished. S. Austin suggested that they were all liars and tyrants, declaring that the parking authority was ridiculous. He stated that he hopes they are happy with his \$43 and that they spent it well. He concluded by reiterating that they are all "f---ing liars," that they "can kiss my ass," and that he will park "however the hell I want" when he is downtown.

Ms. Sprinkle asked S. Austin to confirm that he paid the \$43 ticket. S. Austin stated he did.

Mayor Pruhs, hearing no requests for additional comments, declared Citizens' Comments closed.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA

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

Mr. Cleworth noted that under Unfinished Business, item 11(d), Ordinance No. 6299, would have significant impact on item 11(b), Ordinance No. 6297. He requested that the order of the two items be switched. **Mayor Pruhs** concurred, and no Councilmembers objected.

Ms. Sprinkle pulled item 12(h), Ordinance No. 6302, 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.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

a) Regular Meeting Minutes of October 28, 2024

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- b) Regular Meeting Minutes of November 4, 2024

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

SPECIAL ORDERS

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

Lic. #	DBA	License Type	Licensee	Address
54	American Legion Post 11	Club	The American Legion, Dorman H. Baker Post #11	129 1st Avenue
5926	FatBurger Alaska	Restaurant/ Eating Place	Arcticmonty, LLC	3548 Airport Way

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

Mayor Pruhs called for Public Testimony.

Joseph Collier & Lenora Mathis – J. Collier indicated that they were there to advocate for the renewal of the American Legion Post 11 license. He shared that they are a service organization focusing primarily on veterans and their families. L. Mathis stated that they are excited to continue to serve members and the charitable organizations they support through various fundraising efforts.

Mr. Ringstad asked how many members they have. J. Collier reported that the Post has just short of 100 members but that but that friends, guests, family members, and active-duty military often stop by, making their group of regulars in the hundreds.

Ms. Sprinkle shared that she lives not far from the location of the Post, that she has never experienced any problems with their establishment, and that it is a welcoming place to stop by.

Mr. Marney thanked J. Collier and L. Mathis for attending and for putting a face to the license.

Robert Monteith – R. Monteith indicated that he represents FatBurger and wanted to make himself available for any questions.

Mayor Pruhs, hearing no requests for additional comments, declared Public Testimony closed.

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

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

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

Lic. #	DBA	License Type	Licensee	Address
12325	Good Cannabis	Retail Marijuana Store	Good, LLC	356 Old Steese Highway

Mr. Marney, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to WAIVE PROTEST on the marijuana 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 MARIJUANA LICENSE APPLICATION FOR RENEWAL AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

MAYOR'S COMMENTS AND REPORT

Mayor Pruhs addressed issues with lighting around the City and asked Public Works Director Jeremiah Cotter to provide an update.

J. Cotter reported that the cold weather had been affecting the solenoids in various streetlights around town which caused them to malfunction, only to work again when it warmed up. He noted that the problems were inconsistent and that the contractor, Star Electric, was checking any reportedly malfunctioning equipment to determine whether units can be repaired or need replacement.

Mr. Ringstad asked whether the lights working again was due to increased temperatures. J. Cotter confirmed that was correct and that Star Electric was going through any units that had been reported even if they had come back online on their own.

Mr. Marney asked how long Star Electric had been under contract with the City. J. Cotter stated that he was unsure but would get back to him with that information.

COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Ms. Tidwell, **Mr. Marney**, and **Ms. Therrien** each indicated they had no comments.

Mr. Cleworth stated that parking ticket revenue does not come to the City of Fairbanks nor does the City benefit from any increase in citations. He explained that those revenues go to the Fairbanks Parking Authority, which employs parking agents as well as custodial work at the parking garage.

Mr. Ringstad stated it is not necessary to call people names and use profanity in a public meeting.

Ms. Sprinkle shared that she had the privilege to work with Mr. Marney and a team at the Presbyterian Church over the past weekend, handing out food to those in need, which was a warm experience, despite the cold temperatures. She thanked Mr. Marney for extending the invitation.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a) Ordinance No. 6296 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Section 2-118.1 to Add an Additional City Councilmember to the Council Finance Committee. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6296.

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

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6296 AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6296 ADOPTED.

- d) Ordinance No. 6299 – An Ordinance Ratifying a Collective Bargaining Agreement Between the City of Fairbanks and the Public Safety Employees Association. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6299.

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

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6299 AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6299 ADOPTED.

- c) Ordinance No. 6298 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Chapter 2, Section 655, Multiyear Contracts, Clarifying Requirements for Amendments to Multiyear Contracts. Introduced by Councilmember Cleworth. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6298.

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

Mr. Cleworth stated the ordinance includes suggestions from Attorney Chard that he agrees with.

Ms. Therrien asked if it was correct that if the Council passes an ordinance that covers a two-year period, the terms of Ordinance No. 6298 would mean that unless a funding source is identified, it would be in violation of Fairbanks General Code (FGC). **Mayor Pruhs** confirmed that there must be an identified funding source for any contract that involves the expenditure of funds beyond the first year. **Ms. Therrien** stated that she will not be in favor of Ordinance No. 6298.

Ms. Tidwell expressed concern with the ordinance, noting that all of the City's labor contracts are multi-year agreements and include wage increases. She stated that she does not believe the Council can have sufficient forethought for future years to comply with the terms of the ordinance. She expressed her belief that it would complicate future negotiations and that at some point the Council will have to discuss revenue sources. She indicated that she would not be voting for the ordinance.

City Attorney Chard pointed out that the FGC already requires that a funding source be identified for multi-year contracts and that the only language being added by the ordinance is to assign the same requirements for amendments to contracts. **Mayor Pruhs** concurred.

Mr. Ringstad asked to confirm that any modifications to an existing contract would be treated the same as the original agreement. Attorney Chard confirmed that a funding source would need to be identified for any increased financial obligation by the City for all years of the modification.

Ms. Sprinkle spoke to the concern of nothing ever being guaranteed and that while she would hope that future-year revenues would not be any less than current amounts, there is always the possibility that they would be lower. **Mayor Pruhs** reiterated that the requirement already exists and that the ordinance only extends the same terms to multi-year amendments to contracts.

Ms. Therrien expressed her belief that the Council is not following the requirements being discussed. She pointed out that a funding source was not identified for the Public Safety Employees Association (PSEA) contract that was just approved.

Mr. Cleworth explained that the Council does have a funding source via the growth allowed by the tax cap. He stated it would be a problem if contracts included 10% pay increases when they know the Consumer Price Index (CPI) is lower, such as 3%. He stated that, with a great degree of certainty, the Council can count on funding for all three years of the contract. He likened the situation to buying a car that you can barely afford and that you will unlikely be unable to make payments on down the road. He stated that would not be prudent. **Mr. Cleworth** stated the Council has been given reports from the Finance Committee that paint a bleak outlook for future City revenue. He stated that the PSEA contract is one the City could reasonably afford now and that he has a comfort level for funding it in the future. He asserted that the same could not be said about the firefighter contract which included a \$2MM increase but was not approved. He indicated that adopting both would have blown everything out of the water for the future. He suggested that it is always prudent for an elected official to question the affordability of taxpayer-funded agreements and that the same considerations should be given when amendments or modifications are presented. He expressed his belief that the rules regarding contracts are some of the most important ones the Council has in place because it requires them to budget the City's money responsibly.

Mr. Marney suggested that if someone does not keep up with their checkbook, they will never know how much money they have in the bank.

Ms. Tidwell recognized that the ordinance would only add a few words to the existing Code and asked for an example of a scenario where it would apply. Attorney Chard explained that anytime a contract is being reviewed for approval, a fiscal note is included which outlines a funding source for each year of the agreement. He stated that it has been unclear if an amendment to a contract also requires a fiscal note. He affirmed that the ordinance would extend the fiscal note requirement to amendments.

Ms. Therrien stated that she did not see a fiscal note that covered the second year of the PSEA contract. **Mr. Cleworth** pointed out that in year two of the agreement, there would be an increase of approximately \$70,000, which would easily be covered under the tax cap computations for 2026. **Ms. Therrien** noted that the firefighter contract includes much greater increases which gives her concern.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6298 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Marney, Sprinkle, Ringstad, Cleworth

NAYS: Therrien, Tidwell

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6298 ADOPTED.

- c) Ordinance No. 6297 – An Ordinance Adopting the 2025 Operating and Capital Budgets. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6297.

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

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6297 by substituting the amended, proposed version.

Mayor Pruhs called for objection to the motion to AMEND Ordinance No. 6297 by substituting the amended, proposed version and, seeing none, declared the MOTION CARRIED.

Mayor Pruhs invited Chief Financial Officer Margarita Bell to review the proposed changes as well as the key elements of the proposed 2025 budget. CFO Bell referenced highlighted changes to the operating and capital budgets since the ordinance's first reading, as well as a list of items the Council indicated it would like to discuss further. **Mayor Pruhs** asked if the Council would like to discuss any items or accept all the proposed changes.

Ms. Sprinkle asked for clarity on the \$13,000 increase in "Risk Services" for the Legal Department. CFO Bell explained that it is tied to wages and benefits for the Attorney's Office and that the amount would fluctuate depending on the positions within the Legal Department.

Mr. Cleworth discussed the recruitment and retention tool of Ordinance No. 6300, which was advanced on the consent agenda and would, if adopted at the next meeting, be a contributing factor to the budget item being reviewed. He expressed his belief that the Deputy City Attorney position is often used as a steppingstone or other short-term employment for individuals not seeking a career at the City. He indicated that some flexibility would be useful if they were serious about allocating funds for recruitment and retention, as not every candidate may be interested in a benefit that requires a 10-year commitment.

Mr. Therrien acknowledged the challenge of hiring attorneys in Fairbanks, given the small pool of candidates. She expressed her view that anything the Council can do to help the department is well worth the effort and that this might encourage some candidates to apply. She noted that the expenses the City incurs for outside attorney fees could be reduced with another in-house attorney.

Mr. Ringstad stated that he does not mind having flexibility with the incentive and that they just need to have the funds budgeted.

Mr. Cleworth stated he would like the incentive to be included under the department's benefits but with flexibility to be used as needed if a qualified candidate did not find the original offer appealing. CFO Bell stated that it is listed under benefits but only for the purpose of the incentive.

Mr. Marney pointed out that someone may not know their long-term plans right away and that if they left after five years, money would go back to the City, which would be a win-win.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if it was necessary to go into that much detail on the matter as part of the budget ordinance discussion, given that Ordinance No. 6300 would address the issue specifically if advanced to a second reading. **Mayor Pruhs** explained that the Council was currently determining whether the funds would be allocated for that purpose in 2025, whereas Ordinance No. 6300 would determine whether to enact the incentive long-term.

Mr. Ringstad asked what the Council needed to do to ensure flexibility with the funds to use as a hiring incentive, given that the use of the funds was currently limited in scope. CFO Bell stated that she would need guidance on what type of benefit it should be recorded as.

Attorney Chard shared that if there is a candidate seeking an alternative benefit, he could bring forth a proposed budget amendment, if necessary. He explained that it may be best to tackle that if the need arises rather than trying to determine what alternative options to plan for presently.

Ms. Tidwell acknowledged that the permanent life insurance program the City has used as a retention tool for other departments has been a positive approach, noting that if the person does not stay, the City will not lose any money. She agreed that if a potential candidate has different needs, the Council could address that matter when it arises.

Mayor Pruhs noted that all Councilmembers appeared to be in concurrence on the issue and asked if there was any other discussion on the proposed items.

Ms. Therrien asked for clarification on what changes had already been incorporated with the substituted version and which ones still required action by the Council. CFO Bell reviewed the changes, noting that bolded items in the last two pages of the document were new inclusions.

Mayor Pruhs stated that the Council could vote to approve all the additional changes at once or take them up individually. Clerk Snider clarified that the motion on the floor would adopt the ordinance with all changes included substituted version. She stated that no further motions would be needed if the intent was not to amend the ordinance further.

Mr. Cleworth requested that the Council go through the budget one department at a time to consider any final amendments. **Mayor Pruhs** agreed to use that approach. **Mr. Cleworth** stated that he is not in favor of the \$2,500 increase to City Council travel under the Clerk's Office budget. He pointed out that the City pays \$44,000 for a lobbyist to advocate on its behalf in Juneau and that it costs nothing to make phone calls to State legislators who represent Fairbanks. He indicated that there is no reason for a Councilmember to travel to Juneau and that none of them has the authority to go to Juneau using taxpayer funds to lobby for something that the Council had not already discussed and supported. He reiterated that the cost of the lobbyist is already substantial.

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6297, as Amended, by reducing the amount for Councilmember travel by \$2,500.

Mr. Ringstad discussed the importance of relationships from one elected official to another. He pointed out that there are no members of the Interior Delegation serving on the Legislature's Finance Committee, which makes for a weak financial position for Fairbanks. He expressed his opinion that \$2,500 is a reasonable amount to pay for the benefit of relationships that could best serve the City's needs over time.

Ms. Sprinkle suggested that the City's Legislative Committee could discuss whether or not there would be value to send a Councilmember to Juneau.

Mayor Pruhs stated it began six years ago, when he, Ms. Therrien, and former Councilmember Rogers served on the Legislative Committee. He agreed that there has been value for such activity over the years. He noted that the City has not sent someone every year – only when a need arises.

Mr. Marney asked if it would be appropriate to use the Mayor's contingency fund for that purpose if the need arose in 2025. **Mayor Pruhs** declared that it would not be appropriate.

Mr. Cleworth noted that in the past the contingency fund was used if there was a compelling reason to travel to Juneau. He reiterated that the only matters Councilmembers would be authorized to address were those items on the approved list for the Interior Delegation. He shared that he had more success as Mayor by making phone calls and requesting to speak with the Governor directly.

Ms. Therrien asserted that travelling to Juneau involves a lot of work and that no one does it because it is fun. She concurred that connections are important, that between her and Mr. Ringstad they know a lot of people, and that she believes it is worth the expense.

A ROLL CALL WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6297, AS AMENDED, BY REDUCING THE AMOUNT FOR COUNCILMEMBER TRAVEL BY \$2,500 AS FOLLOWS:

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

Mr. Cleworth stated the Council previously discussed salary increases for the Chief of Police and the Fire Chief that were not included in the Mayor's original budget. He explained that the salaries of both positions are outlined in a union labor agreement wage schedule with steps, depending on experience and performance. He stated that the majority of the Council approved an increase to both salaries at a budget work session. He referenced a lengthy email the Council recently received regarding the salaries. He suggested that proposed increases should come from the administration instead of the Council picking an arbitrary number to increase wages to and indicated that the process should have included deliberate thought, with a proposal brought forth at a future meeting.

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6297, as Amended, by removing the \$7,300 increase to salaries and benefits for the Police Chief.

Ms. Sprinkle expressed concern with the amount of the increase because it did not seem to be in parity with other increases. She pointed out that increases for administrative positions between the Police and Fire Departments were not consistent and suggested that a percentage be used instead.

Ms. Therrien shared that the reason she advocated for the increase was due to the report showing that in 2023, every lieutenant and sergeant made more money than the Police Chief. She stated she does not believe the Police Chief should make less than those he supervises. She noted that due to the position being exempt from overtime and its heavy workload, the increase is not inappropriate.

Mr. Cleworth indicated that because of the frequent opportunities for overtime across the police force, he did not recall a single year where the Police Chief made more than most lieutenants and sergeants. He pointed out that top-level positions being exempt from overtime was the norm across most organizations or businesses and that making less than subordinate positions was not uncommon. He reiterated that that is the inherent nature of hourly-versus-salaried jobs.

Ms. Sprinkle recalled that the Council was told that if the City were to lose its Police Chief, the current salary would not be high enough to attract a new one. **Mayor Pruhs** clarified that the Council was told that the current Deputy Police Chief and Police Captain would each take a pay cut if they were promoted to the Police Chief position.

Mr. Cleworth indicated that he was merely recommending that staff come back to the Council with more specific numbers and research to justify the increase. He acknowledged that the increase may actually end up being higher but reiterated that he was not comfortable with the process of how the proposed increase was formulated. He agreed that the discrepancy between the increases for the Fire Chief and the Police Chief was also a concern.

Ms. Tidwell pointed out that the department had proposed a much higher number, and the \$7,300 increase was a compromise. **Mr. Cleworth** clarified that he is suggesting that the Council receive information from Human Resources and the administration, not the department directly.

Ms. Sprinkle asked how the mechanics of Mr. Cleworth's suggestion would work, given that the Council had to approve some salary amount. **Mayor Pruhs** explained that after research plus a report and presentation, the Council could consider a budget amendment by way of an ordinance.

A ROLL CALL WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6297, AS AMENDED, BY REMOVING THE \$7,300 INCREASE TO SALARIES AND BENEFITS FOR THE POLICE CHIEF AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Cleworth

NAYS: Therrien, Tidwell, Ringstad, Marney, Sprinkle

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION FAILED.

Ms. Sprinkle discussed the increase to the Fire Chief salary, noting that it was much higher than that of the Police Chief. She stated that she meant no disrespect to the Fire Chief but that it was a significant jump from one year to the next and asked whether it was appropriate. She suggested an increase proportionate to that of the Police Chief might be fairer. **Mayor Pruhs** asked whether Ms. Sprinkle was making a motion. **Ms. Sprinkle** indicated that she was not necessarily ready to do so. **Mayor Pruhs** ruled that, if not, the Council would continue to the next item.

Mr. Cleworth commented that the proposed budget added more staff than any annual budget he had ever seen. He addressed the eight-position increase at the Fairbanks Fire Department (FFD) and stated a ninth was being proposed with the addition of a Deputy Fire Marshal. He pointed out that the staffing increase coincides with dwindling revenue and questioned the Council's actions.

Mr. Cleworth moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6297, as Amended, by not funding the new Deputy Fire Marshal position. The motion died due to lack of a second.

Mr. Marney noted that the Council eliminated an Assistant Fire Chief position to provide for the new Deputy Fire Marshal position. **Mr. Cleworth** replied that the Council is still adding far more positions than ever before and that cuts need to be made somewhere.

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6297, as Amended, by increasing the General Account budget for Abatements by \$50,000.

Ms. Sprinkle shared that the person hired to fill the recently added Code Enforcement and Abatement Specialist position has a long list of Council-approved items to pursue. She stated he needs adequate resources to ensure success. She noted that the funds are intended to help clean up problem properties and that all funds may not be spent, depending on how far he gets.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6297, AS AMENDED, BY INCREASING THE GENERAL ACCOUNT BUDGET FOR ABATEMENTS BY \$50,000 AS FOLLOWS:

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

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6297, as Amended, by adding \$90,950 to the Fairbanks Police Department budget for wages and benefits for an Equipment Manager.

Mayor Pruhs noted that the PSEA contract only allows for admin assistant or clerk positions.

Ms. Therrien explained that the question arose as to who would take care of equipment. She stated the Council needed to decide whether to have a higher-level role take on that responsibility or whether to designate it as its own position. She noted that the Police Captain has been handling the duties, which has been contributing to overtime. She expressed her opinion that it is a waste for a captain to be performing those duties on overtime. She indicated that she was also open to the position being titled something other than "Equipment Manager."

Mr. Ringstad asked for clarity on the position title options and on the note included in the handout. CFO Bell reported that Schedule A of the PSEA collective bargaining agreement listed negotiated positions that could be added. She stated that "Equipment Manager" was not one of them. She explained that while the same duties could be assigned, the position would need to be titled an administrative assistant or clerk. **Mr. Ringstad** concurred with Ms. Therrien's point that if the goal is to reduce overtime, it does not make sense for the duties to be handled by the Police Captain.

Mr. Marney asked whether it would be a full- or part-time position. **Mayor Pruhs** indicated that it would be a full-time position.

Ms. Sprinkle pointed out that in addition to managing equipment, there is little-to-no relief at the department for the many administrative duties, so the position would be a welcome support.

Mr. Cleworth asked to confirm what the current fund balance would be taking into account the discussed changes. CFO Bell reported that the balance would be approximately \$586,000, not taking into account the \$90,000 for the current position being discussed. **Mr. Cleworth** pointed out that it is unknown what will come of the ongoing deliberations on the firefighter labor contract and that at the rate the Council is going, there will be no money left. He addressed the challenge of getting through 2025 with only \$586,000 in available funds and stated that the Council is spending money very easily. He expressed concern for the coming year and stated that while the department requests are justified, the Council does not have the luxury to say yes to everything.

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to AMEND the amendment on the floor by striking the title "Equipment Manager" and replacing it with "Administrative Assistant or Clerk."

Ms. Therrien stated that the title change seemed necessary given what had been shared regarding the contract. She highlighted the benefit of reduced overtime once someone is hired and trained.

Mr. Marney asked to confirm that a recent email was sent regarding Police Captain overtime. CFO Bell confirmed that she sent an email showing about \$27,000 in overtime for that position.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND THE AMENDMENT ON THE FLOOR BY STRIKING THE TITLE "EQUIPMENT MANAGER" AND REPLACING IT WITH "ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT OR CLERK" AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Sprinkle, Therrien, Tidwell, Ringstad

NAYS: Marney, Cleworth

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6297, AS AMENDED, BY ADDING \$90,950 TO THE FAIRBANKS POLICE DEPARTMENT BUDGET FOR WAGES AND BENEFITS FOR AN ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT OR CLERK AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Sprinkle, Ringstad, Tidwell, Therrien

NAYS: Cleworth, Marney

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6297, as Amended, by increasing wages and benefits at Public Works by \$106,050 for a full-time, permanent laborer position and by reducing the temporary worker budget for wages and benefits by \$100,000.

Ms. Therrien discussed the challenges with temporary labor and stated that training, mistakes, and supervision sometimes add unseen costs. She stated that having someone in a permanent position often results in higher quality work and is an overall better value for the City.

Ms. Sprinkle recalled a discussion that highlighted a need for the position due to a new garbage truck that would require an additional worker. She noted that the cost appears to be almost a wash.

Mr. Ringstad asked if the \$100,000 for temporary laborers was for multiple people or a single worker. CFO Bell explained that there are a few long-term, temporary laborers with the department each year and that the change would remove one of those full-time, long-term, temporary roles. **Mr. Ringstad** acknowledged that the Council would be trading one for the other.

Ms. Sprinkle pointed out that temporary labor often comes at a higher rate to the City.

Mr. Cleworth suggested that Councilmembers are fooling themselves if they think that they can reduce the amount for temporary labor, citing the fact that the City has been over budget in that area the last two years. He noted that during budget work sessions the Council determined that \$2MM was a more appropriate number than the \$1.8MM the department requested. He explained that this is one of the few budget line items where the City truly has no control, given that Mother Nature determines how much additional help Public Works needs each winter. **Mr. Cleworth** indicated that if the Council approves the permanent position, it will have to be tied to a firm commitment to limit temporary labor expenses, which he is not willing to do. He stated that the reality is that the change would not be a wash. He shared that if there was one area he would like to add more personnel it would be there but that he wants to be fair in his efforts to reduce expenses.

Ms. Tidwell pointed out that the Council already increased funds for the department to cover one new laborer and that the proposed change would add another position. She acknowledged that there are shortages in this area just as there are in other departments but that she would like to see how things go with the one position already added before considering a second.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6297, AS AMENDED, BY INCREASING WAGES AND BENEFITS AT PUBLIC WORKS BY \$106,050 FOR A FULL-TIME, PERMANENT LABORER POSITION AND BY REDUCING THE TEMPORARY WORKER BUDGET FOR WAGES AND BENEFITS BY \$100,000 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Therrien

NAYS: Cleworth, Sprinkle, Ringstad, Marney, Tidwell

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION FAILED.

Mr. Cleworth reviewed his budget concerns by discussing the changes and trends he has seen over the last several years, beginning with the FFD (his initial comments are summarized below):

- Budgets have grown from 2016 to 2025 by:
 - 65% at FFD,
 - 14% at Fairbanks Police Department (FPD), and
 - 27% at Public Works.
- Personnel levels have changed from 2018 to 2025, if the budget is adopted as-is, by a:
 - 45% increase at FFD,
 - 8% decrease at FPD, and
 - 8% increase at Public Works.
- The Capital Fund Account for FFD:
 - contained \$1.9MM at the end of 2016,
 - had only \$1,641 carried over into January 2024, and
 - will have nothing left at the end of 2024.

Mr. Cleworth stated that this is the only time he has ever seen the Council ignore capital needs for FFD and that this will hurt down the road. He noted the cost of a new platform being over \$2MM with fire engines estimated at \$1MM or more. He admitted that he is unsure where the City will get money for those items the next time the need arises. **Mr. Cleworth** discussed staffing levels for fire departments across the country, noting that the population of the City of Fairbanks would dictate a staff of 36 employees to be on par with the national average. He pointed out that FFD has 44 employees, not counting the Fire Chief or Fire Marshal, and that the 2025 budget will bring the total to 53. He recounted that the rallying cry for needing more people was focused on the high call volume for the department. He shared that the Council was given a long list of call data which he reviewed. He indicated that the list did not match the numbers for calls that had been provided by the Fairbanks Emergency Communication Center (FECC, or “Dispatch”) Manager, a discrepancy which he is unable to explain without further study. He stated that the call volume between 2020 and 2023 increased by 5% and that the majority of calls were for non-emergency transports. He pointed out that in 2020, FFD had 43 personnel, not including upper management, and that an increase of 5% to match the call volume would have been equivalent to adding two positions – not 53. **Mr. Cleworth** discussed the alternatives being worked out for non-emergency transportations by private companies and the creation of the Community Paramedic position in the

past year. He reminded the Council that the FFD service area shrank due to the non-renewal of certain fire service contracts in the surrounding area. He suggested that the Council look at call volumes more objectively going forward, and he shared comments from 2020 by the Fire Chief at that time, when the minimum staffing level went from 9 to 11 per labor contract negotiations. He pointed out that the same number was included in the contract that was recently considered by the Council. He asked why the City is now adding all the new positions and questioned whether it was a deliberate step towards adopting a four-platoon system. He stated that he believes it is.

Ms. Tidwell called a point of order, questioning whether Mr. Cleworth's comments were germane to the motion on the floor. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that the Council was in discussion regarding the main motion to adopt the budget and that he believes Mr. Cleworth is sharing his reasons as to why he will not be voting in favor of Ordinance No. 6297, as Amended.

Mr. Cleworth asked if the four-platoon system would add more services to Fairbanks citizens and answered his own question by declaring that it would not. He stated, however, that it would add a lot more personnel with the same minimum staffing of 11 that existed a few years ago. He recalled hearing the new system lauded as a recruitment tool but pointed out that the department rarely has problems recruiting. He noted that retention of employees after two or three years is the real challenge, which is not dissimilar to every other business in town. He reiterated that a four-platoon system does not add services and that the reason no one else in Alaska uses it could be because it does not financially pan out. He expressed hope that the numbers he shared will convey the sense that the Council is going down the wrong path by adding so many positions in one year. **Mr. Cleworth** shared his concerns for the budget in general, citing that 2024 revenue was \$49,022,000 but only \$48,161,000 is projected for 2025. He pointed out that even with revenues on a downward trend, the Council is still adding 8.5 full-time equivalent positions. He discussed the stagnant population of roughly 32,000 over the last 30 years, and stated that despite that, the Council is constantly adding more positions. He referenced the restrictions under the City's Charter as well as the tax cap, stating that he fears the Council is going beyond capacity. He expressed concern that the Council is leaving no room for labor negotiations or extenuating circumstances and that it is throwing the dice, hoping that new or more revenue will come later. He cited the Finance Committee's repeated message of deficits being forecasted within just a few years. **Mr. Cleworth** reiterated that the Council has not put any money into the Capital Fund for FFD and that if he had any reason to believe it would pass, he would make a motion to move some funding from new positions to FFD's Capital Fund. He thanked the Mayor for starting off the budgeting process with a draft that included a \$2.6MM surplus and concluded by stating that the Council spends too much.

Mayor Pruhs asked what remained of the reserve after the amendments that had been made. CFO Bell reported that with all amendments factored in, the remaining reserve balance was \$1,704,984. She noted that with the now-adopted PSEA contract, that reserve amount dropped to \$495,496.

Ms. Therrien spoke to Mr. Cleworth's comments about the stagnant City population and pointed out that the City provides certain services for everyone in the Borough. She stated that many services, such as ambulance transports and traffic citations, generate revenue regardless of whether or not the individual is a City resident. She indicated that call volumes and the population of the entire surrounding area must be taken into consideration.

Mr. Cleworth agreed that there is a large daily influx of people who work, but do not live, within city limits, as well as an outflow of residents who work outside city limits. He spoke to the criticism the City sometimes receives for not taxing those who use City services but live elsewhere. He noted that taxes exist in various forms, such as business licenses and property taxes, and those costs must get passed on to customers in one way or another.

Mayor Pruhs thanked all Councilmembers for their hard work and valuable opinions, even when there were disagreements. He thanked staff members involved in the budget process, particularly CFO Bell and Chief of Staff Sanders, to whom he stated the City owes a debt of gratitude for their dedication. He expressed appreciation for all employees' understanding when something in the budgeting process does not seem to go in their favor.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6297, AS AMENDED, AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Sprinkle, Ringstad, Marney, Tidwell, Therrien

NAYS: Cleworth

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6297, as Amended, ADOPTED.

NEW BUSINESS

- a) Resolution No. 5145 – A Resolution Stating the City of Fairbanks Legislative and Capital Priorities for 2025. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs and all City Councilmembers.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- b) Resolution No. 5146 – A Resolution Authorizing the City of Fairbanks to Participate in the FFY2024 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- c) Resolution No. 5147 – A Resolution to Form a Cooperative Agreement Between the City of Fairbanks and Moore Street Seniors, Inc. to Participate in the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs and all City Councilmembers.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- d) Resolution No. 5148 – A Resolution Amending the City Schedule of Fees and Charges for Services by Eliminating the Fee for Telephonic Payments. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- e) Resolution No. 5149 – A Resolution Authorizing the City of Fairbanks to Accept Funds from the Alaska Division of Homeland Security for the FFY2024 State Homeland Security Program. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- f) Ordinance No. 6300 – An Ordinance Establishing a Supplemental Retirement Permanent Life Insurance Plan for the City Attorney and Deputy City Attorney to Enhance Recruitment and Retention. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs and Councilmembers Tidwell, Marney, Ringstad, Therrien, and Sprinkle.

ADVANCED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- g) Ordinance No. 6301 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Section 50-205, Adding Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day as an Observed City Holiday. Introduced by Councilmember Therrien.

ADVANCED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- h) Ordinance No. 6302 – An Ordinance Adopting the 2025 Lavery Transportation Center Budget. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to ADVANCE Ordinance No. 6302.

Ms. Sprinkle asked for clarification on the numbers presented in the Lavery Transportation Center budget. She noted that it is a zero-sum situation which does not cost the City anything but asked where the \$219,000 in operating cost came from. CFO Bell reported that the amount was provided by the Fairbanks Parking Authority and is calculated by expenditures over the last several years. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked if any revenue above what is in the adopted budget is split equally between the Authority and the City. CFO Bell explained that the City pays 100% of the operating cost for the Lavery Transportation Center and that some of that includes personnel costs associated with its operation. She clarified that the City does not pay for any parking enforcement agents that issue parking citations in the downtown area. **Ms. Sprinkle** thanked CFO Bell for the information and asked if this was the first time the Council has seen something like this. CFO Bell confirmed that the item was not included in the budget ordinance as it was not part of the Mayor's proposed budget. She indicated that it is a separate fund from those included in the budget process.

Mr. Marney asked if the Council has any say on the fees or charges levied by the Fairbanks Parking Authority. CFO Bell shared that the Authority has a board that reviews the operating costs and other aspects of the parking garage and that they make changes as necessary. She stated that there have not been any changes in three or four years but that any time a proposal is considered, it comes to her for review. She affirmed that the organization works closely with her and communicates well. **Mr. Marney** shared that he recently saw that there is a special rate being offered for Sunday evenings to make it easier for people to move their vehicles off the street for snow removal. CFO Bell reported that the majority of the parking garage's revenue is from monthly contracts and businesses that pay a monthly fee to reserve a certain number of spots.

Mr. Ringstad asked for clarification on a reference in the document to a Capital Fund balance. CFO Bell thanked Mr. Ringstad for catching that and affirmed that it was a typo. She said it should read, "Fairbanks Transportation Fund Balance," which is a separate account with its own balance

at the end of each year, due to it being a property. **Mr. Ringstad** acknowledged that he was still unsure of how a ~\$5.7MM balance exists for a facility that does not make anything beyond what it costs to operate. CFO Bell clarified that the balance includes the value of the facility itself and that it is not a cash account. **Mr. Ringstad** asked if there was a separate cash account for capital needs for the garage. CFO Bell indicated that there is not such an account and that any major purchases or infrastructure changes occur through the Transportation Fund. **Mr. Ringstad** asked how a major expense for the garage would be covered. CFO Bell reported that as far as available cash, there is about \$80,000 in property value that could be accessed. She noted that page 17 of the most recent audit outlines the associated financial values for the Lavery Transportation Center. **Mr. Ringstad** asked if the Authority would have to come before the Council to seek funding for a large improvement or repair. CFO Bell confirmed that was correct and, if approved, it would involve a transfer from the General Fund. **Mr. Ringstad** pointed out that all other departments are expected to budget for and set aside funds to build their own capital accounts, but that does not seem to be the case for the parking garage. CFO Bell stated that was also correct.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if that was something that could be implemented. CFO Bell confirmed that the Council could include a transfer of any amount into a fund for that exact purpose by way of a budget amendment. She shared that there have been times she has included a request for a transfer into the Transportation Fund as part of a budget amendment.

Mr. Ringstad asked if there were liability concerns should something happen to a vehicle in the garage that was parked under a contract. Attorney Chard stated he would have to review the lease agreement to determine the extent of liability and better understand the ownership of the structure.

Mr. Marney asked if there was history to show the transfers that have occurred over the years. CFO Bell referred him to the audit which included records of all transferred amounts.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADVANCE ORDINANCE NO. 6302 AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TO THE CITY COUNCIL

- a) Reappointment to the Permanent Fund Review Board

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. Ringstad stated he had no report or additional comments.

Mr. Marney shared that he had attended his first Fairbanks Diversity Council (FDC) meeting in November, that he already knew some of the members, and that it appears to be something that will be worth his while.

Ms. Tidwell reported that she has not had any meetings for some time for either of the committees she participates in but that they both have something scheduled soon. She expressed relief to be done with the budget process. **Mayor Pruhs** thanked Ms. Tidwell for her diligent service as a member of the Planning Commission, noting that her time serving on that body will soon be coming to an end. **Ms. Tidwell** stated that she will miss serving on the Planning Commission.

Mr. Cleworth stated he had no report or additional comments.

Ms. Therrien expressed regret that she had not been able to help Mr. Marney with a previous service opportunity but shared that she was able to visit the Rescue Mission with her Rotary Club over the Thanksgiving holiday. She stated that she was impressed that the Rescue Mission houses 200 people and that the facility is in great condition. She expressed gratitude that the Mayor reappointed Patty Mongold to the Permanent Fund Review Board, where Ms. Mongold has served well as the Chair. **Mayor Pruhs** shared that he had visited P. Mongold recently and that she told him about her upcoming retirement, which did not deter him from reappointing her. He agreed that she brings a wealth of knowledge and confidence to the Board. **Ms. Therrien** asked how the meeting had gone with the Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) Mayor to discuss legislative priorities. **Mayor Pruhs** shared that it did not happen and that they are working to reschedule.

Ms. Sprinkle reported that she will soon attend her first meeting of the Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors in the Mayor's stead. She shared that she believes there is a collective recognition by the community of the detrimental impact that the elimination of local news programs has had. She expressed frustration that an entity in Atlanta, Georgia could end the local news in Fairbanks, Alaska. She stated she was unsure how to approach the issue.

Mayor Pruhs invited City Lobbyist, Yuri Morgan, to give a brief report on legislative priorities and his efforts to help see them come to fruition. Y. Morgan thanked the Mayor and Council for approving the resolution outlining priorities for 2025. He indicated that the current list has more items than in past years, which will keep them quite busy. He reviewed details of the upcoming legislative session and expressed excitement to continue to advocate on behalf of the City.

Ms. Sprinkle asked Y. Morgan if he would like the priorities presented in a different format, such as a ranking of primary concerns. Y. Morgan stated that it does not matter to him but that the Council is always welcome to convey a particular priority. He indicated that although the items are numbered, he does not interpret that to imply order of priority. He affirmed that he would review each item and set a strategy for how to best reach the desired outcome. He acknowledged the wide selection of issues on the list.

Ms. Therrien recalled how Y. Morgan would meet with the City's Legislative Committee in the past and asked if he would be making time to do that again. Y. Morgan confirmed that he would continue to do so along with working with the Chief of Staff. He reiterated that it will be important to talk to individuals outside of the Interior Delegation, given the City's list of priorities.

CITY CLERK'S REPORT

Clerk Snider stated that she had nothing to report.

CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Attorney Chard indicated that he had nothing to report. He expressed his continued thanks for the Councilmembers' dedication and commitment to the community.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to ENTER into an Executive Session to discuss FFU/COF Labor Negotiations.

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

Mayor Pruhs called for a brief recess. The Council reconvened in Executive Session following the brief recess.

- a) FFU/COF Labor Negotiations [permissible under State law, including the provision at AS 44.62.310(c)(1)] (*entered at 8:43 p.m.*)

Mr. Cleworth stated that the Council met in Executive Session to discuss FFU/COF Labor Negotiations. He affirmed that direction was given to staff, and no action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT

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

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

Mayor Pruhs declared the meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.



DAVID PRUHS, MAYOR

ATTEST:



D. DANYELLE SNIDER, MMC, CITY CLERK

Transcribed by: CC