



FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, APRIL 28, 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
 Lonny Marney, Seat E
 John Ringstad, Seat F

Absent: Crystal Tidwell, Seat D (excused)

Also Present: D. Danyielle Snider, City Clerk
 Thomas Chard, City Attorney
 Michael Sanders, Chief of Staff
 Margarita Bell, Chief Financial Officer (remotely)
 Ron Dupee, Police Chief (remotely)
 Andrew Coccaro, Fire Chief
 Richard Elton, Assistant Fire Chief
 Troy Dennis, Deputy Fire Marshal
 Jeremiah Cotter, Public Works Director
 Teal Soden, Public Information Officer (remotely)

INVOCATION

The invocation was given by City Clerk Danyielle Snider.

FLAG SALUTATION

At the request of Mayor Pruhs, **Mr. Ringstad** led the flag salutation.

CEREMONIAL MATTERS (Proclamations, Introductions, Recognitions, Awards)

Fire Chief Andrew Coccaro introduced two new members of the Fairbanks Fire Department (FFD): Assistant Fire Chief Richard Elton and Deputy Fire Marshal Troy Dennis. A pinning ceremony was performed. He also recognized Fire Marshal Kraig Bryan for recently achieving a Special Commission as a State of Alaska Peace Officer. He noted that this is the first time in a very long time that a City Fire Marshal has had such credentials.

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.]

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad** moved to waive the overall time limit for Citizens' Comments, allowing all who had signed up the opportunity to speak, and to extend the individual time limit from three to four minutes.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO WAIVE THE OVERALL TIME LIMIT FOR CITIZENS' COMMENTS, ALLOWING ALL WHO HAD SIGNED UP THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK, AND TO EXTEND THE INDIVIDUAL TIME LIMIT FROM THREE TO FOUR MINUTES AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Therrien, Cleworth, Sprinkle, Ringstad, Marney

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Tidwell

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

Mayor Pruhs read the text of a recent post he made on social media, as follows:

“Did my morning walk through Golden Heart Plaza with my K-9 units. Did not find any beat-up toilets! The graffiti on the bridge (we know the tagger) gets removed and painted over by the FNSB Parks and Rec when warmer temperatures come. As the warmer temperatures have come, more people come in from villages or come out of shelters to live their lifestyle. We operate the downtown on behalf of Fairbanks residents, but we live here too, not just for visitors. The foot patrol police presence starts in 3 weeks — not because of the tourist season, but because wonderful, retired police officers come back and spend their summers/fall in Fairbanks working on behalf of its residents. A Portland Loo will be installed to the east of the log cabin in a month. This summer we are totally remodeling the park area to the west of the cabin, to Cushman Street along the river, to give Fairbanksans another place to be proud of spring/summer/winter/fall.”

Brian Ridley – B. Ridley shared that he is the Chief Chairman of the Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC), which represents 42 communities and 20,000 tribal members across Interior Alaska. He stated that the Mayor's recent post deeply hurt his people, who are vital contributors to the community. He pointed out that Fairbanks was built on the traditional lands of the Athabascans and that Alaska Native peoples have lived here for over 10,000 years. B. Ridley discussed their impact on the local and state economy. He recounted how Alaska Natives have fought against racial profiling and stereotyping for decades and that the Mayor's post and the comments from others has shown the fragility of that progress. He asserted that there was a lack of response from the Mayor in the immediate aftermath of his post and that the silence spoke loudly. B. Ridley expressed appreciation for the Mayor's willingness to learn from the incident but suggested that actions will matter more than words. He discussed the services TCC provides to its members, acknowledged the complex challenges with homelessness, and affirmed TCC's commitment to provide care for the community.

Ms. Therrien thanked B. Ridley for his comments and asked if there was any specific action he would like to see the Council take. She noted that one of her goals is to have more communication between the City and TCC and collaborate on projects. B. Ridley stated that he believed things were moving in the right direction at the start of both his and Mayor Pruhs' terms. He expressed appreciation for the efforts made by law enforcement and suggested that the groups start holding regular meetings again.

Mr. Marney voiced support for the goal of togetherness that B. Ridley had expressed.

Sharon McConnell – S. McConnell shared that she is the president of Fairbanks Native Association (FNA) and that they are disappointed and disturbed by the Mayor's disparaging remarks about Alaska Natives, visitors, and village residents. She asserted that such comments are unbecoming of a leader and expressed hope that the Council would reflect on the situation and take action. She discussed the diverse population of Fairbanks and its role as a hub to a large region of Alaska. She shared that FNA was created almost 50 years ago, specifically to address discrimination of Alaska Natives. S. McConnell expressed disappointment that veiled comments continue to be made by individuals; she extended an invitation to the Mayor to meet with FNA's Administration and Board. She suggested that the meetings, which have occurred in the past, are a way to build bridges.

Mr. Cleworth spoke of "no-fly lists," a controversial issue that he had learned of a while back. He asked if FNA had taken a position on the matter. S. McConnell admitted that she was unfamiliar with the topic but that members of the FNA administration have indicated that no position had been taken. **Mr. Cleworth** stated that he would be interested in any information on the issue if subsequent speakers had any knowledge to share.

Shirley Lee – S. Lee shared that she is the Deputy Director of FNA and recounted a sign displayed at businesses as recently as the 1960s which read: "No Dogs or Natives Allowed." She discussed how Alaska Native World War II veterans were denied entry to establishments in downtown Fairbanks, which led to the creation of FNA. She stated that the Mayor's chosen words were both inaccurate and disrespectful. She stated that representatives from FNA and TCC should not have to come to a City Council meeting to address discrimination and invited the Mayor and Council to work with both organizations as genuine and transparent partners for the betterment of Fairbanks.

Mr. Marney asked how to begin the process of meeting. S. Lee indicated that they would like to work with the Mayor directly but that the Council should be involved. She asserted that the Council's silence on the issue could be perceived in many ways and encouraged them to issue a statement.

Ms. Therrien reported that she had only just heard about the situation and asked when it occurred. S. Lee stated that the post was made on April 25.

Teisha Simmons – T. Simmons discussed the concept of bias and the need for leaders to be aware of their own biases. She stated that it takes genuine, authentic relationships with those who differ from oneself to overcome biases. She shared examples of her own experiences with discrimination and overcoming internal biases as a youth, and she urged parents in the community to make a concerted effort to combat such tendencies. T. Simmons spoke of the Mayor's personal radio show, which she listened to earlier that day, and indicated that his responses to callers expressing different

opinions made his position on the issue unclear. She expressed a willingness to work together to build cultural strengths and opportunities while addressing existing challenges in the community.

Angel Stickman – A Stickman shared that she is from the village of Shungnak but has lived in the Fairbanks area for 15 years. She discussed her education and the importance of ensuring that true history is remembered and taught. She stated that the implication of the Mayor's words were disrespectful, racist, prejudice, and dangerous. She asserted that his post shows that he either knows very little about Alaska Native history or that he does know but just hates them. She discussed the history of systemic racism and harmful laws towards Native peoples and suggested that the best outcome would be to work towards unity, showing compassion and not hate.

Lisa Steele – L. Steele stated that she has lived in Fairbanks for 15 years and has earned degrees in social work and behavioral health. She shared that her husband had been killed by police in Fairbanks and discussed her experience with unfair laws and policies. She addressed the Mayor's comments and the generalization of those who visit Fairbanks from villages as well as Alaska Natives who live in Fairbanks year-round. L. Steele asserted such sentiments cause an increase in Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP) cases, massive incarceration, a lack of empathy, and other issues. She discussed the greater impact of the Mayor's post due to his official position. She spoke of how systemic racism has led to higher rates of poverty and alcoholism, suggesting that it was the Mayor's ancestors who brought harm to Native peoples, which has led to generational trauma and unhealthy coping skills. L. Steele stated that the Mayor's stereotyping teaches others to be racist and encouraged him to become more educated. She asserted that Alaska Natives are some of the strongest people on Earth. She called upon the Mayor to take back his statement and learn from the experience.

Laura Ekada – L. Ekada shared that she is the Treasurer of the FNA Board of Directors. She quoted a portion of the Mayor's post. She declared that it was insulting to Alaska Natives and to those who live in villages, suggesting that they are all drunk and homeless. She discussed the contribution of Alaska Native visitors and organizations to the local economy and asked why the Mayor would so rashly insult a large portion of his constituents. She advocated for the City Council to condemn the Mayor's comments.

William C. "Spud" Williams – S. Williams recounted growing up in Nenana, Alaska, seeing the end of World War II as a boy, graduating from Lathrop High School, and visiting Fairbanks during many catastrophes over several decades. He declared that 2nd Avenue used to be a successful business district but has been destroyed by the City, with stereotypical, prejudicial views of Alaska Natives being a contributing factor to its demise. He pointed out that Native peoples make up about 16% of the Fairbanks population, and many are very successful. S. Williams stated that as long as Mayor Pruhs remains in his position, he will advocate for the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) to never return to Fairbanks, where they spend millions of dollars while attending annual meetings. He reported having known the Mayor's father and claimed that he was a nice man who would not have condoned what was shared. He asserted that the Council should vote to replace the Mayor.

Joshua Peter – J. Peter shared that he is the IT Director of FNA and is originally from Nulato, Alaska but has lived in Fairbanks and raised his family since the 1990s. He indicated that the Mayor's social media post infers a connection between those who visit Fairbanks from villages with a lifestyle of homelessness and alcoholism. He discussed the harm that stereotypes cause to all city residents, not just Alaska Natives. He highlighted the immense contributions Alaska Native

individuals and organizations make to Fairbanks and stated that the Mayor and City Council should focus on unity, setting a tone of inclusion and respect. J. Peter noted the diversity in Fairbanks and how the community thrives when all residents are respected and valued. He urged the City leadership to take accountability for the situation and reflect on the legacy they hope to leave.

Ms. Therrien noted that the Fairbanks Diversity Council (FDC) has several vacancies and asked if he could help spread the word to potentially recruit more members for the group.

Glenn Carlo – G. Carlo shared that he is the son of William and Poldine Carlo, some of the founders of FNA. He recounted how FNA was created to fight prejudice against Native peoples and to give them equal chances at employment in Fairbanks. He expressed disappointment in what the Mayor wrote and wondered if nothing was learned from the \$11.5 million settlement that the City was recently involved with [*Roberts v. City of Fairbanks, et. al*], a case which is viewed by many as another example of racial prejudice. G. Carlo reported that he is also a board member for the Denakkanaaga organization and would be happy to break bread and share soup with the Chief and any Councilmembers who would like to stop by.

Wally Carlo – W. Carlo stated that those who had previously spoken had adequately conveyed many of his thoughts. He spoke of the countless Alaska Natives who served in the United States military over the past century and how they rarely got the same respect as other veterans. He cited a soldiers' parade through downtown Fairbanks long ago which excluded any Native service-members. He indicated that he took offense to the Mayor's words and suggested that it was a direct reflection on the Mayor and Council. W. Carlo discussed how many Alaska Native veterans suffer from their war experiences, which has sometimes resulted in a life on the streets. He recounted that one part of town used to have covenants in place preventing the sale of property to Native individuals. He shared another experience of his mother, who was a great leader in the community, pushing back against a former City Council after learning of an attempt to label handmade goods manufactured by Alaska Natives in order to levy taxes on the sale of those products. He highlighted the wide range of professionals in the room.

Misty Nickoli – M. Nickoli shared that she is from Kaltag but has lived in Fairbanks for nearly 30 years, having graduated from the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF). She added that she is a veteran, combat medic, and nurse in the U.S. Army Reserves, following in the footsteps of her mother, a former combat medic with the Alaska National Guard. She discussed hearing racist rhetoric towards Alaska Natives over the years, with suggestions that she was an exception to the disrespectful ideas being shared, which affected her greatly. She spoke of her efforts over the years to improve herself as a person, with the idea that it would give her value as a human being, yet she still faced and continues to face racism in public spaces. M. Nickoli reported that she gets followed in businesses as though she is a suspected thief. She asserted that such ideas are perpetrated by things like the Mayor's post and that those things convey a sense that racism and bigotry are okay. She echoed the words of previous speakers suggesting that leaders must review their mistakes, change, and move forward. She stated it would be important for all Councilmembers to learn how to de-colonize themselves.

Julie Smyth – J. Smyth stated that they are a resident of Fairbanks, live a block away from City Hall, and are neither male nor female. They stated that public safety should be for everyone in the community, not just those who own property or a business within city limits, and that foot patrols should not cover only the downtown. They asserted that elected officials should take personal

responsibility for their chosen words and not brag on their radio show about receiving calls of support following a controversial post. J. Smyth declared that the Mayor's claims about the intent of his comments were disingenuous or perhaps an outright lie. They indicated that it was disgusting, as someone born and raised Inupiat, to be told that they should get to know the police department. They alleged that one of the retired police officers coming back to do summer work used to beat their father after he came out of bars downtown at night, to the point where he could not care for them, resulting in being turned over to the foster care system. They stated that the Mayor and Council needs to think about who they represent and be honest about where they stand.

Victor Buberger – V. Buberger acknowledged that some apologies may be due but that he wished to provide some breathing room for the Mayor and discuss the state of potholes. He shared that he recently hit a large pothole on Badger Road which required replacing a tire, and the shop worker told him he was the eighth person to bring their vehicle in for service due to the same pothole. He noted, with congratulations, that this was not a pothole within city limits but highlighted that it is pothole season.

Richard Croteau – R. Croteau stated that he had intended to speak about a not uncommon situation that he had recently experienced on Cushman Street. He admitted that he was not aware of what he was walking into at the meeting and, as such, felt that it would be more appropriate to listen to the other voices present. He indicated that his issue could be addressed at a later time.

Jomo Stewart, President of Fairbanks Economic Development Corporation (FEDC) – J. Stewart apologized in advance if his report on FEDC activities would come across as tone deaf, given the comments being shared by others. He indicated that he listened to all who had previously addressed the Council and that he would respectfully continue to do so once he concluded. He reported that the FEDC has received seven of the ten resolutions of support it is seeking for the effort to make FEDC the Alaska Regional Development Organization (ARDOR) for the greater Fairbanks area. J. Stewart stated that the goal is to submit the full application packet by June 30 which, after a 30-day public comment period, would result in a vote at the state level sometime in August. He shared that the FEDC continues to help Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) with its Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), including roundtable discussions and an upcoming public survey. He concluded with updates on other FEDC activities, such as a local business climate survey and the Small Business Accelerator program.

Bobby Dorton – B. Dorton pointed out that underlying problems do not get resolved unless someone speaks up. He shared that he has had many positive experiences with individuals in the City administration, including support with clothing and housing needs after being released from incarceration. He discussed his love for TCC. He spoke to the challenge of being torn between two entities, like in the current situation or when he has spoken fondly of politicians elsewhere in Alaska only to see them come out later and say something racially insensitive. B. Dorton pointed out that individuals are quick to talk about alcohol and people they see on the street, yet he has not heard anything about the recent shooting death at a nearby bar for quite some time. He reported that former Mayor Matherly had invited him to serve on the FDC, which he did with great energy, striving to be a matchmaker between leaders. He urged Mayor Pruhs to come out of his comfort zone and show support for the Native people, raising a hand when a mistake is made, and not falling into the trap of pride that he himself had been guilty of in the past. He expressed that he is not against the Mayor personally; rather, he is against the overall situation at hand.

Diana Campbell – D. Campbell shared that something stuck out to her as she listened to the Mayor's personal radio program earlier in the day. She indicated that he had stated he wrote his post quickly, in his car, early in the morning after a walk downtown, and that it was in response to another, particularly vile post, which she agreed was awful. She expressed hope that the Mayor will understand that addressing something as volatile as the post he was responding to should include more consideration and preparation. D. Campbell explained that she is the Communication Director at FNA and could imagine that others with jobs similar to hers would have loved to have helped guide a more appropriate response which would convey clarity and thoughtful leadership. She spoke of the frustration felt by community members following the confusing sentiment, leaving them angry and having to fill in the blanks. She asserted that if the Mayor did not mean harm by his words, it is hard to know what else it could have implied. She expressed pride in the eloquent thoughts expressed by Alaska Native community members attending the meeting.

Darlene Herbert – D. Herbert shared that she has lived in Fairbanks for a long time and attended Lathrop High School which was difficult as a Native person due to the prejudice that pervaded at that time. She acknowledged that the experiences made her tough, but she eventually turned to alcohol for many years. She recounted a spiritual awakening that led her to turn away from drinking and begin a 28-year career working on the North Slope, eventually retiring through the Laborers Union. D. Herbert expressed pride in her Alaska Native heritage and in the examples of kindheartedness she sees from others in her culture. She spoke of the sad turn of events as she sees more Native individuals having meth introduced into their lives. She expressed that she feels powerless to fix such problems other than to encourage the younger generation to exercise their right to vote. She stated she has no hate for Mayor Pruhs and acknowledged that he admitted fault.

Travis Cole – T. Cole shared that while originally from Allakaket, he has lived in Fairbanks for a long time. He added that he is a single father, has worked at TCC for 16 years, and has served on the FNA Board of Directors for 11 years. He discussed his personal connection to the issues in downtown Fairbanks, having previously been homeless, depressed, suicidal himself. He asserted that homeless people he has met have been some of the nicest individuals he has ever known. T. Cole discussed the previous offensive post that had been disparaging of Alaska Native individuals in the Golden Heart Plaza (GHP). He shared that the morning following that post, as he participated in a walk to raise awareness for child abuse, he stopped in the GHP to pick up trash., and some homeless individuals joined him in cleaning up the area. He emphasized the power of action over words, especially when seeking positive change. He reminded the Council that Native people are as human as everyone else and that homelessness can happen to anyone. He recounted that some of his friends pulled through and made it out of the same challenges he faced, but many others were lost to drugs and alcoholism on the streets. He discussed the human experience, including mistakes such as the Mayor's post, and how such comments can put targets on people's backs.

April Mae Shoemaker – A.M. Shoemaker expressed her desire to see Fairbanks come together more united, to spend less time on Facebook, to be a little less offended, and to be a little more involved in positive efforts. She stated that she does not believe the Mayor's post was deliberately racist but was him just saying it how it is. She agreed that the GHP sees an increase of people in the warmer months and indicated that she is not offended that someone pointed that out, nor that more police officers would be working downtown in the summer. She expressed love and care for fellow citizens and asked that the matter not be made it something it was not meant to be.

Maggie [no last name provided] – Maggie stated that she did not want the comment period to end on the note of the previous speaker due to the microaggressions she perceived. She indicated that she did not expect a White woman to be offended by racism against Alaska Natives and that A.M. Shoemaker had not shared her experiences with serving on boards because she probably did not have any. She accused Mayor Pruhs of being dismissive towards the powerful testimonies that had come before her and claimed that he had been rolling his eyes and checking his phone. She concurred with the statements of others regarding accountability and the hope that he had learned something from the experience.

Connie Summer – C. Summer stated that she only wants to see respect for the many diverse components of the community. She added that she does not want her grandchildren to feel racism or prejudice but wants their voices to be heard and accepted. She expressed a desire for the MMIP cases to receive more active investigation, transparency, and communication.

Liz Reeves-Ramos – L. Reeves-Ramos stated that her comments represent her own personal opinions. She shared that the Borough Assembly, of which she is a member, is holding a special meeting to discuss how the words of those in leadership carry extra weight. She discussed being raised in Fairbanks but having never learned the history of Indigenous People of Alaska until she took a class at UAF. She spoke of the personal impact from learning about the trauma that Native peoples have endured. She reiterated that those in positions of power need to think before they speak and that she has never seen TCC and FNA come out with a statement so quickly. She echoed the hope that the Mayor will listen to those who have spoken. She shared that she works in the adult protective services sector, often in rural communities, and sees examples of racism across the state. She declared that Alaska Natives are strong, resilient people who should be respected.

Nikitaa Kelly – N. Kelly shared that the last time she spoke at a City Council meeting was to advocate for the removal of an alcohol license due to a concern that profits were more important than people. She recounted earlier comments about MMIP and violence at bars and suggested that the Mayor's comments on Facebook allow an environment against Native people to grow. She noted that she is often not perceived as an Alaska Native due to her lighter skin, and because of that, she has heard nasty comments that otherwise might not have been uttered in her presence. She stated that as a result, she grew up with a lot of shame.

Malik Williams – M. Williams shared that he recently moved to Fairbanks and has goals to graduate college and serve in the military. He stated that he does not believe the local economy is too bad and that he would like to learn more about the community and the history of the groups of people that call Fairbanks home. He stated he is new to town, is unsure of local laws or whether he has broken any, and hopes to have positive results during this chapter of his life.

Randy Griffin – R. Griffin shared that he enjoys listening to the Mayor's personal radio show and that he very much appreciates Alaska Natives and considers them to be what makes Alaska what it is. He spoke fondly of goods made by Native peoples and attending the World Eskimo-Indian Olympics. He voiced support for those who choose to move to or visit Fairbanks as well as for those who prefer to continue life in villages and other rural parts of the state. R. Griffin referred to the Mayor's Facebook post and indicated that he did not see any racism in it and recognized that the Mayor was responding to an earlier, negative post. He pointed out that the problems downtown are caused by individuals of various races and backgrounds and that he believes the Mayor was making connections regarding the lifestyle of homelessness from the original post.

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

Mayor Pruhs stated that rather than waiting for the Mayor's Comment and Report portion of the agenda, he would like to address the situation on the record while everyone was still present. He shared that he submitted a Community Perspective article to the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, which was scheduled to be published the following day. He noted that the beginning of the article quotes the language of the Facebook post which he read earlier in the meeting. The rest of the submission, as published Tuesday, April 29, 2025, read as follows:

"So how did this post start? I was traveling on Thursday when I started getting texts about a malicious post on the Fairbanks, Alaska, Facebook page. He equated the people who hang out at Golden Heart Plaza — and the city's care of the Plaza — to a dirty, used toilet. He even posted a photo of a used toilet. He claimed that the city only cleans it up for summer tourists, that summer is the only time police are present, and that we let it "go to hell" the rest of the year. He also posted a video showing clothing, food and trash strewn about during his visit. It did not present the facts fairly.

Just about every morning now, as the sun has returned, I go for early morning sunrise walks with my two dogs. I walk from the borough building to the river, under the bridges, across the footbridge, up to the Morris Thompson Center, then back home. I do this around 6 a.m. each morning. As I did my walk on Friday, I saw that the park was clean and presentable.

At 7:15 a.m. Friday, I parked on First Avenue, got out of my vehicle, and took two photos of Golden Heart Plaza from different angles. I posted them along with the comments above.

There was no malicious or racist intent on my part. I was answering, sticking up for, and protecting this wonderful park and the people who use it from inaccurate statements made the day before.

The references to the toilet and police were made in response to that critique — not directed at the people who use the Plaza. In my post, I also included updates about improvements we're making this summer: the installation of the Portland Loo (a much-needed public restroom downtown) and the upgrade of the park area west of the log cabin. These upgrades show we are proud of Golden Heart Plaza and continue to invest in its operation, presentation and structure.

Interestingly, the person who posted the original critique was also critical of my post and continued to berate the park, its users and Fairbanks. I answered some of the questions that came in — such as how and when police remove people from the park. (Police only remove a person if alcohol is involved, and even then, it is only for the remainder of the day.)

I was criticized by someone who said she was a past EMS provider and commented that she never needed dog protection. I replied that my dogs — a Dalmatian and a Blue Heeler — are not protection dogs. I also said I always carry plastic bags to pick up after them. I mentioned that the new EMS provider service would be starting within a week or so.

I was asked if I pick up trash, and I answered yes, I do — mainly under the bridges and in front of the church tables, as that's where most of the food wrappers

and other trash end up. (Some wonderful Fairbanksans, after reading that response, went down and cleaned up even more of the area.)

I live within a five-minute walk of Golden Heart Plaza. Over the years, during my morning walks with my dogs, I have never received any hostility, bad comments or threats from anyone I have encountered.

It is that time of year when Plaza and park activity naturally increases with the sunshine — just as it does throughout the Interior. From May through October, we are all active outside. We pack 12 months of activities into six months. With the return of sunlight, we all come out to live life outdoors. It's why we live in Fairbanks.

A few clarifications:

In my post, I think a better wording would have been: "We operate downtown on behalf of the residents of Fairbanks, not just for the tourists."

Also, the sentence "As the warmer temperatures come, more people come in from villages or come out of shelters to live their lifestyle" could and should have been phrased better.

I meant no disparagement toward rural Alaska residents. I spent my childhood summers at Healy Lake, and those memories are some of the best of my life.

I wrote the Facebook post quickly, from my cell phone, while parked on First Avenue, wanting to quickly address the insult posted the day before. I did not mean to insult or denigrate anyone. I realize those sentences could be construed as insensitive, and that was never my intent.

I apologize sincerely for my words.

If you would like to meet with me — to offer criticism, ideas for Golden Heart Plaza or Fairbanks, or to just talk — please call me directly at 907-750-2888."

Mayor Pruhs acknowledged that the memory of his father had been invoked by S. Williams and confirmed that thoughts of what his parents would think are never far from his mind. He stated that his father would have directed him to own his mistakes, and he committed to doing so. He indicated that he would keep topics for social media posts limited to food, his dogs, and his girlfriend, using a Public Information Officer's input if things needed to be addressed publicly. He pointed out that he did not mention alcohol in his post, in his responses to others, or in the article to be published. **Mayor Pruhs** expressed hope that everyone understands that he had no malicious intent and was sticking up for Fairbanks and everyone in the community, who he deeply cherishes. He indicated that Fairbanks is the best town in the world, and he will look at the situation as a learning opportunity. He indicated that he will be putting together a group, primarily of Alaska Natives, in order to further discussions on racism, drugs, the effects of colonization, and more. **Mayor Pruhs** committed to learn and to help. He admitted that he did not realize his comments would be considered racist until the day following the post and that he knew at that moment that he could not take the post down until he had owned up to the situation and addressed it properly, as he was now striving to do. He responded to the invitations from several individuals who had spoken and confirmed that he would love to meet with them and build a better path forward. He shared that he would be traveling for the next week or so but that he looks forward to having conversations upon his return. **Mayor Pruhs** apologized to the community, City personnel, and Councilmembers.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA

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

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

Clerk Snider read the consent agenda into the record.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

a) Regular Meeting Minutes of April 14, 2025

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
77	300 Club	Beverage Dispensary	Karen A. Meadows-Sours	940 Cowles Street
3282	Circle K	Package Store	Holiday Alaska, LLC	No Premises
1966	Loyal Order of Moose #1392	Club	Fairbanks Lodge #1392	98 10th Avenue
576	Club SinRock	Beverage Dispensary	Kcornis, LLC	1347 Bedrock Street

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

Mayor Pruhs called for testimony.

Mary Muradyants – M. Muradyants indicated that she did not have anything specific to state but was available as a representative for questions pertaining to the Circle K application.

Ms. Sprinkle asked for clarification on the proposed action for the Circle K license. M. Muradyants explained that the license was purchased from Sam's Club when it went out of business but had not had a registered premises since then. She added that the license was up for renewal and was now also being transferred to a location. **Mayor Pruhs** pointed out that the location transfer would be addressed as a separate item, which was next on the agenda.

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

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

YEAS: Marney, Ringstad, Cleworth, Sprinkle, Therrien
NAYS: None
ABSENT: Tidwell
Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

- b) The Fairbanks City Council held a public hearing and considered the following alcohol license application for transfer of location:

Type/License: Package Store, License #3282
To DBA: Circle K
To Owner: No change
To Location: 575 Harold Bentley Avenue, Fairbanks
From DBA: No DBA
From Owner: Holiday Alaska, LLC
From Location: No Premises

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to WAIVE PROTEST on the alcohol license application for transfer of location.

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

Ms. Sprinkle asked for confirmation that there was currently no alcohol being sold under the license. **Mayor Pruhs** confirmed that no alcohol is currently being sold at the Circle K gas station and convenience store on Harold Bentley Avenue. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked if the transfer would provide a new opportunity to purchase alcohol across the street from the Brown Jug, an existing alcohol license holder. **Mayor Pruhs** confirmed that was correct.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO WAIVE PROTEST ON THE ALCOHOL LICENSE APPLICATION FOR TRANSFER OF LOCATION:

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

MAYOR'S COMMENTS AND REPORT

Mayor Pruhs reported that demolition work had resumed on the Polaris Building and they have reached the point of crafting a Request for Proposals (RFP) for development. He shared that there are already a few interested parties, and he looks forward to sharing what comes from the process.

COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. Ringstad expressed the opinion that everyone should go home early.

Mr. Marney suggested that, while long and difficult, the meeting was good. He stated that the voices heard were legitimate and that the sensitive topics discussed had been a red herring for many years. He expressed a desire to be a part of those open discussions.

Ms. Sprinkle stated that the meeting had been an opportunity to learn. She conveyed appreciation for the Mayor stepping up and asked to be included in whatever happens next.

Ms. Therrien indicated that the Council should take seriously the issues that have been raised. She noted that she has been suggesting that there is a need to work with the Alaska Native community and stated that she would like the Council to be included in at least the initial meetings. She expressed hope that she had not offended anyone herself with past comments but offered an apology if that was the case. **Ms. Therrien** asked if the Council would have the opportunity to look at the Polaris property RFP. **Mayor Pruhs** indicated that he had reached out to the City Engineer to discuss next steps and committed to keeping the Council informed.

Ms. Sprinkle recounted an introductory letter that the City Engineer had previously composed and asked if it would be included. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that the letter would complement the RFP.

Mr. Cleworth thanked the Council for adopting Resolution No. 5171 regarding mutual aid. He noted that is a way to enhance the services available to residents without adding costs. He expressed hope that everything necessary is done to ensure the Polaris Building demolition will be completed by the October deadline. **Mr. Cleworth** stated that he appreciated the many comments from earlier, although he wished that more people would have stayed around to hear the Council's comments, especially given the accusation that the Council had been silent on the matter. He indicated that he especially liked what T. Cole and C. Summers had to say. He admitted that he took exception to some comments, particularly about Alaska's history, but he welcomes dialogue.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – None

NEW BUSINESS

- a) Resolution No. 5170 – A Resolution Authorizing the City of Fairbanks to Apply for Funds from the Alaska Highway Safety Office for FFY26 DUI Traffic Enforcement Unit. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- b) Resolution No. 5171 – A Resolution Authorizing the City of Fairbanks to Enter Into Mutual Aid Agreements for Emergency Medical Transport. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs and All City Councilmembers.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

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

ADVANCED on the CONSENT AGENDA

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TO THE CITY COUNCIL

- a) Fairbanks Diversity Council Meeting Minutes of February 11, 2025

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- a) Reappointments to the Discretionary Fund Committee

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Ms. Sprinkle reported that she attended a Chena Riverfront Commission (CRC) meeting the previous week, which went long given that they only meet quarterly and have many items to consider. She noted that the CRC discussed Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) which was very educational. She shared that the group received an update on the Pioneer Park boat ramp scheduled for construction in 2027. She reported that the topic of the Minnie Street Bridge continues to be absent from their agendas though she does not understand why. She stated that the recent Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors meeting had been cancelled.

Mr. Ringstad indicated that he had no further comments or report.

Ms. Therrien reported that she attended the most recent Borough Assembly meeting as the City representative. She shared that one of the major items of discussion was an ordinance regarding random hand counts to verify the accuracy of election equipment. She recounted her experience working in elections and spoke about the processes used to verify accuracy and refuted the conspiracies regarding election equipment fraud. She expressed hope that the ordinance will calm fears. **Ms. Therrien** discussed a bill in the state legislature regarding the willful surrendering of infants in what is referred to as "baby boxes." She reviewed some history on the topic, the status of the legislation, as well as those with whom she had communicated on the matter thus far. She reported on the interactions she and Mr. Ringstad had with legislators and their staff members during their recent trip to Juneau.

Mr. Marney offered to help Ms. Therrien connect with folks at TCC regarding the baby boxes effort. He reported that the FDC did not have a quorum at the last meeting. He recounted that the City Clerk's recent report to the Council included a note that City boards and commissions had not been thorough reviewed since 2019. He suggested that this, along with the elections chapter of the Fairbanks General Code (FGC) would be worth discussing in the near future. Clerk Snider confirmed that it is helpful to review election procedures every few years to maintain consistency between the City and Borough. She clarified that the Borough ordinance regarding hand counts would apply only to Borough elections unless the Council chose to adopt a similar requirement. **Mr. Marney** expressed his belief that the Mayor had appropriately taken ownership of the issues addressed earlier in the meeting and that he would like to consider the matter done.

Mr. Cleworth addressed the Minnie Street Bridge and confirmed that the Fairbanks Area Surface Transportation (FAST) Technical Committee had recently reviewed the status of its Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). He stated that he did not recall Minnie Street being brought up but that he would look into it more and ask why it was not included. He noted that some of the earlier public testimony referenced cold cases of missing individuals. He recounted that six or seven years prior, the Council approved the addition of a specific position at the police department to focus on such cases. **Mr. Cleworth** discussed how one case from several decades ago, that of Sophie Sergei,

had been solved with the help of the Alaska State Troopers (AST). He requested a future update from the Police Chief as to whether there was still a position focused on cold cases.

Ms. Therrien reported that the Permanent Fund Review Board (PFRB) and the Downtown Association of Fairbanks would meet the coming week. **Mayor Pruhs** asked that the PFRB look into ways to increase the City's rate of return. **Ms. Therrien** shared that the Board has discussed diversifying the City's investments and that she would take the Mayor's request to the Board.

CITY CLERK'S REPORT

Clerk Snider noted that she submitted her 1st quarter report to the Council and that she would be out of town for the remainder of the week. She shared that the Citizen's Engagement Academy (CEA) had concluded its evening sessions and encouraged listeners to consider enrolling in 2026. She thanked the Council and Administration for supporting the program and reminded them that there would be a facilities tour the coming week and a graduation ceremony preceding the Council's next regular meeting.

CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

City Attorney Chard congratulated the City Clerk on another excellent year of the (CEA). He reported that a few candidates had been interviewed for the vacant Deputy City Attorney position and that he hoped to have positive news to share soon.

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 8:50 p.m.



DAVID PRUHS, MAYOR

ATTEST:



for **D. DANYIELLE SNIDER, MMC, CITY CLERK**

Transcribed by: CC