



FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, AUGUST 12, 2024
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
 June Rogers, 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 (remotely)
 Andrew Coccaro, Fire Chief
 Richard Sweet, Deputy Police Chief
 Jake Merritt, Human Resources Director
 Kristi Merideth, FECC Manager
 Brynn Butler, Housing Coordinator (remotely)
 Jeremiah Cotter, Public Works (PW) Director
 Roy Bryant, PW Facilities Manager
 Danny Lee, PW Laborer Foreman
 Jeremiah Record, PW Mechanic Foreman
 Myrlene Wheelock, PW Operator Lead
 Alex Lexa, PW Facilities Laborer
 Tracy Morphis, PW Dispatcher

INVOCATION

The invocation was given by City Clerk Danyielle Snider.

FLAG SALUTATION

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

Debbie Rathbun – D. Rathbun shared that she and her husband own property at 737 7th Avenue which suffered fire damage in June 2022. She stated that she learned the day before through reading an article in the newspaper that the City had published an Invitation to Bid ad to demolish the structure on the property. She expressed frustration at the process of insurance adjusters being replaced, each with a different idea of what happened, as well as out-of-town engineers submitting inaccurate reports and analysis about their property. She discussed how this caused multiple delays in their efforts to rectify the situation. D. Rathbun indicated that they had to utilize the full two-year window available by their insurance to have their claim submitted to the company's satisfaction, which was completed less than two months ago. She stated that discovering the City had plans to demolish their building was disheartening after everything they have been through.

Mayor Pruhs asked if she could provide, within the next two months, a detailed plan for their intended schedule of steps towards resolving the situation. D. Rathbun replied that she could try but might have difficulties with her husband being out-of-state fighting forest fires. **Mayor Pruhs** explained that two months from now would be late enough in the year to result in no action taken until summer 2025. He explained that properties make their way onto the City's lists for abatement for a variety of reasons. He affirmed that active communication with owners and a focus on reasonable, timely solutions, will always be the preferred outcome. He acknowledged that D. Rathbun had visited him in 2023 to share her story of insurance challenges.

Ms. Rogers asked if she had other interactions with City staff other than her visit with Mayor Pruhs in the summer of 2023. D. Rathbun shared that they have had multiple visits with Building Department staff to inform them of the challenges with their insurance company. She indicated that she does not have any specific grievances with individual City staff members but rather with discovering through the newspaper that her property was going to be demolished. She outlined the challenges that would have come if they had driven by and found the property leveled.

Mr. Marney noted that he has interacted with her in the past and asked if they had been able to keep up with the yard at the property. D. Rathbun stated that they have done their best. **Mr. Marney** expressed sympathy and acknowledged the practice of insurance companies changing adjusters multiple times before finally writing a check.

Jomo Stewart, President of Fairbanks Economic Development Corporation (FEDC) – J. Stewart shared that FEDC completed a large analysis of the Fairbanks economy earlier in the spring, a copy of which had been recently provided to all Councilmembers. He stated that they intend to make this an annual project and invited them to reach out with any questions. He noted that the military presence accounts for about one third of the local economy and gave details about the upcoming Alaska Defense Forum. J. Stewart shared that he will be giving a presentation on the Fairbanks economy to a Rotary group in Anchorage soon and that he intends to discuss opportunities that exist for economic development between the communities. He extended an invitation for others to share their ideas of this nature with him so he can add to his presentation. He gave an example of improvements for cargo landings at the Fairbanks International Airport.

Ms. Rogers asked if he was aware of the many relationships that exist between Fairbanks and Anchorage in the arts and culture communities. J. Stewart stated that he is. **Ms. Rogers** suggested that they are not what they used to be and reigniting those would be an opportunity to explore.

Mr. Marney shared that the News-Miner recently published an article about the large variety of agricultural items grown in the early 1900's, which seemed to go away over the century. He asked if he had read the article. J. Stewart stated that he had not read the article but that this topic had been discussed many times in the past at FEDC. He gave details about their Chef at the Market program, where a local chef makes demonstration dishes with locally grown ingredients. He expressed hope that more exposure to these options will help regrow this industry.

Ms. Rogers asked if he has spoken with Joan Skilbred for additional historical perspective, cited how virtually everyone in Fairbanks used to grow their own food many years ago. She indicated that the Pioneers group has a wealth of information. J. Stewart thanked her for the suggestion.

Savannah Fletcher, Presiding Officer of Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly – S. Fletcher stated that she was here to provide an update after Borough Mayor Ward had a conflict. She shared that on August 22 she will be introducing an Ordinance that would remove the five-minute time limit for representatives of the City Councils of North Pole and Fairbanks, as well as the school board, to provide reports during Assembly meetings. She indicated that this was an effort to show support and remove an unnecessary limitation. She thanked Ms. Tidwell for bringing forward a request for reconsideration on Resolution 5116 regarding joint economic development powers. S. Fletcher noted that in the past, the Mayors of all three local municipalities sat on that Economic Development Commission and that Mayor Ward has expressed interest in a similar approach going forward. She clarified that these would be official seats, created in addition to the existing Commission membership, and that each Mayor could designate a representative to fill their seat. She reiterated their hope to move forward and resolve any remaining issues such as FEDC spending allocated funds and questions about the Alaska Regional Development Organization (ARDOR) for their region.

Ms. Sprinkle acknowledged the interest of Mayor Ward revising the Commission seats but asked if the Assembly was in favor of such a change. S. Fletcher admitted that since nothing has been put before the body, she could not say officially but that she feels confident they will support it. She indicated that Mayor Ward intends to bring forth the effort as an Ordinance.

Mr. Cleworth stated that he sat on the Commission many years ago and that at the time they were told that its existence was required in order for the Borough to receive certain grants. He asked if that was still the case. S. Fletcher responded that she is not aware of which, if any, current grants have that as a requirement and that the primary focus of the Commission in recent years was parameters for tax exemptions for larger, multi-family units. **Mr. Cleworth** expressed a desire to learn more about this topic. He recounted that another major issue that has yet to be resolved is the topic of taxation. He noted that a separate mill rate designated for economic development was correctly listed this year which, according to his records, had not happened for some time. He asked how that particular tax began, as he does not recall it going before the voters. He added that this appears to exist outside the established tax cap and that they have yet to receive an answer to this question. S. Fletcher acknowledged that Mr. Cleworth has more historical knowledge of this topic than she does and admitted that she too has yet to receive answers to these questions. She stated that they hope to move forward and empower the Commission to take up these kinds of questions going forward, especially before the next year's budget cycle begins. **Mr. Cleworth** asked to confirm that the Borough Mayor wants to pursue the changes to Commission seats, which the Council has encouraged. S. Fletcher confirmed that he does and will do so via Ordinance which the Assembly will be asked to approve.

David van den Berg, Executive Director of the Downtown Association of Fairbanks – D. van den Berg expressed appreciation in the example of fair and firm processes that are in place when he heard the exchange between D. Rathbun and Mayor Pruhs. He encouraged the City to continue to make it a priority to address dangerous and blighted properties, especially in the downtown area. He discussed the Downtown Fairbanks 2040 Plan and how his organization will be diligent in taking it at face value regardless of whether it is officially endorsed by the City Council. D. van den Berg addressed the absence of contractor for the Emergency Services Patrol (ESP) and that they have encouraged those with pending invoices for ESP services to hold off until they have a firm plan in place. He stated that payments received thus far have been remitted to the City to cover any additional costs that may have been incurred this year for downtown security. He shared that the Association supports Resolution No. 6285, that they believe it will be a positive action, and that they are willing to help think it through.

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA

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

Mr. Cleworth pulled item 7(b), Special Meeting Minutes of July 30, 2024, 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 July 22, 2024

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

b) Special Meeting Minutes of July 30, 2024

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to APPROVE the Special Meeting Minutes of July 30, 2024.

Mr. Cleworth suggested a correction on page 2 of the Minutes, where an ambulance was incorrectly referenced as "geriatric" rather than "bariatric".

Mayor Pruhs called for objection to the APPROVAL of the Special Meeting Minutes of July 30, 2024 with the suggested change and, hearing none, so ORDERED.

SPECIAL ORDERS

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

Lic. #	DBA	License Type	Licensee	Address
435	Garden Island Party Store	Package Store	Market Basket, Inc.	246 Illinois Street

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

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

Mr. Cleworth asked if this was the same license they had considered at last month's meeting. **Mayor Pruhs** clarified that the same licensee had a recent application for transfer of location but that this was actually for the renewal of their license and a separate step from the transfer.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if there was still going to be alcohol sold at this address. **Mayor Pruhs** explained that they will continue to sell alcohol here until their transfer is complete.

Mr. Marney stated that given its location, only eight calls on the Dispatch report was incredible.

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

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

MAYOR'S COMMENTS AND REPORT

Mayor Pruhs asked FECC Manager Kristi Meredith to give an update on Dispatch Center staffing.

K. Meredith reported that FECC:

- Currently has ten full time dispatchers.
- They are in the process of changes in supervisory positions, which they will recruit for externally if they are unable to fill internally.
- One trainee began August 1.
- There are five part-time call takers/dispatchers with another starting September 1.
- Two candidates are in the background check phase.
- Two candidates have applied and passed the testing phase.
- Five staff went through the Comm Center Manager class.
- They hope to bring in some trainers to allow more staff to participate in additional classes.

K. Meredith discussed more of the department's training processes and various procedures. She noted that many policies are being updated to be more relevant and user-friendly, while remaining consistent with the other information provided from partner agencies.

Mr. Ringstad asked for additional information about the supervisor positions. K. Meredith indicated that they have four supervisors and one operations manager within their budget. She

explained that all four supervisor positions are vacant but have staff rotating through in “acting supervisor” capacities as they go through the hiring process.

Ms. Tidwell referenced a past action that provided funds for more individuals to fill a training pool prior to positions becoming available. She asked if that was proving successful. K. Meredith stated that they have not yet reached a place where that program had been utilized, as new hires are able to be placed into vacancies. She affirmed that this program will still be useful in the future.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if the new hires were local. K. Meredith affirmed that they take applications from anyone but the current batch of new hires includes someone moving up from Anchorage and several others from out of state who are looking to relocate to Fairbanks.

Mr. Marney asked for more details on the process of becoming a full-fledged supervisor versus an acting supervisor. K. Meredith explained that it is simply part of the hiring process and that those who are acting in the roles are submitting resumes in order to be interviewed. **Mr. Marney** asked if they are creating new policies that did not exist previously. K. Meredith clarified that the policies are not new but are just being renewed and updated for better understanding by everyone, whether they have worked at the department for ten days or ten years. She shared that all employees are taking an active part in contributing to the policy updates. **Mr. Marney** asked how the renovation for the backup dispatch center is going. Chief of Staff Mike Sanders gave an update on the contract that has been awarded and options for the servers needed for the facility. He indicated that this will be a multi-year project.

Mayor Pruhs thanked K. Meredith for her report. He gave an update on current abatements:

- Old Coin King building – The owner has the resources and intent to upgrade the building but is waiting for clarity on a planned State DOT project which would impact the property.
- 113 2nd Avenue – The owners have made progress with cleaning the property and intend to continue doing such through Summer 2025.
- 124 2nd Avenue – This property had a lien which has been paid in full.
- 2319 Rickert Street – This has been completed.
- 737 7th Avenue – This was discussed earlier under Citizen’s Comments. The Mayor has asked for a plan for resolving the identified issues.
- 305 Kellum Street – Owner Pete Kelly is in the process of demolishing the structure here.
- 311 Bonfield Street– City Attorney Tom Chard reported:
 - The owner of this property died in the fire that damaged the structure.
 - There is no next of kin available.
 - The Borough has indicated that property taxes are up to date.
 - The existing senior tax exemption will expire now that the owner is deceased.
 - The property will likely enter the foreclosure process.
 - If there is a health or safety concern, the City can pursue abatement.
- 1516 Eielson Street – This building caught fire, damaging the neighboring structure. It is in the communication and notification stages of the abatement process.
- 2116 Rickert Street – The owner has indicated he will remodel the damaged fourplex. The Mayor will check back on this next summer.
- 419 4th Avenue – This is the Alaskan Motor Inn which has weekly status changes. The Mayor indicated he will meet with all involved parties soon. The buyer is considering private demolition options.

- 307 12th Avenue – Fire destroyed most of the structure and there is not much left to abate.
- 129 3rd Avenue – A new owner is on record for this property. The Building Official will send out a letter to abate.

Mr. Ringstad noted that the fire on Eielson Street resulted in the neighboring residents being put out of their home. He recalled that a fire also occurred at the same location a year prior.

COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. Ringstad indicated that he had no comments at this time.

Mr. Marney thanked Victoria Dowling for accepting the open position on the Discretionary Fund Committee, as noted in the memo later in their agenda packet.

Ms. Tidwell shared that the Alaska Defense Forum will take place August 26 to 28 at the Westmark Hotel and encouraged everyone to take time to attend. She reported that there will be a meeting for the Economic Development Commission on September 3 where they will look at a Borough Ordinance regarding tax incentives for homeowners.

Mr. Cleworth stated that many of the individuals who spoke against the alcohol license transfer application at the last Council meeting had indicated plans to contact the Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) Board. He asked if any of them had also contacted the City Clerk's office after the meeting. Clerk Snider stated that several people had contacted her office on the matter. She shared that the ABC Board had already considered that license at its quarterly meeting which occurred prior to the Council's meeting and that they had approved it with delegation, which authorized renewal pending any protest from local governments. She noted that the ABC Board's website did not publish any notice of action to verify the outcome but that she had shared methods of contact with any concerned residents who reached out. **Mr. Cleworth** stated that it seemed strange to him that the ABC Board would make a decision before local governments had officially weighed in and that residents should have the chance to testify to the Board after doing so at the local level, not retroactively. He expressed desire to learn if this was the Board's typical procedure, as it is not the methodology he recalls from the past. **Mr. Cleworth** spoke about the Borough Ordinance on tax incentives that Ms. Tidwell addressed and stated that he believes it is quite different than the City's, as the Borough's is focused on multi-family, apartment buildings.

Ms. Rogers expressed the sentiment that this focus on housing is necessary in order to maintain the sense of community that has existed in Fairbanks for generations. She thanked those who are putting time and attention into the subject. She noted the recent passing of former Councilmember Valerie Therrien's father who was close to 107 years old. She expressed condolences to the family.

Ms. Sprinkle indicated that she had no comments at this time.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a) Ordinance No. 6286, as Amended – An Ordinance Amending the 2024 Operating and Capital Budgets for the Third Time. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

Note: A procedural error was made at the second reading of Ordinance No. 6286 on July 22 – a public hearing was not held. As a remedy, another reading will be held to include a public hearing. At the July 22, 2024 regular City Council meeting, Mr. Marney, seconded by Ms. Sprinkle, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6286. Amendments, including substitution of an amended, proposed version, were passed. The motion to ADOPT remained on the floor.

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. 6286, AS AMENDED, AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6286, as Amended, ADOPTED.

- b) Request for Reconsideration by Council Member Tidwell of the motion to APPROVE Resolution No. 5116, as Amended. The resolution was approved by the City Council on July 22, 2024, and the request for reconsideration was filed with the City Clerk on July 23, 2024.

Resolution No. 5116, as Amended – A Resolution Authorizing an Agreement Between the Fairbanks North Star Borough, the City of North Pole, and the City of Fairbanks to Jointly Provide for Economic Development. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

Ms. Tidwell, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to RECONSIDER Resolution No. 5116, as Amended.

Ms. Tidwell acknowledged that they have spent a lot of time discussing this Resolution. She shared that after it was approved, she and Ms. Sprinkle met with the Borough Mayor to better understand the history and discuss a better working relationship between the City Council and Borough Assembly. She stated that she has an amendment that she believes will resolve some of remaining concerns and give Mayor Pruhs the authority to sign the agreement between the City of Fairbanks, City of North Pole, and the Borough, allowing them to move forward.

Ms. Sprinkle agreed that the passion put into this issue is strong and that if there is an option to make the situation better, it is worthy of reconsideration.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO RECONSIDER RESOLUTION NO. 5116, AS AMENDED, AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

Ms. Tidwell, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to AMEND Resolution No. 5116, as Amended, by striking Section 2, renumbering the remaining sections accordingly, and to have Section 4 read: “The City of Fairbanks would like to work cooperatively with the Fairbanks North Star Borough to resolve the issue of the ARDOR, to get clear resolution of the Fairbanks North Star Borough’s taxing authority for economic development, and to establish representation on the FNSB Economic Development Commission.”

Ms. Tidwell shared that the current language of contingencies within Section 2 adds unnecessary complications to the process and that their meeting with the Borough Mayor made it clear that the intent to work cooperatively is strong. She noted that they learned how, in the past, the Commission had designated seats for all three local mayors and that a resolution to reestablish this practice was forthcoming at the Borough level. She clarified that Mayor Pruhs would have the choice to sit on the Commission or appoint another Councilmember or another representative of his choosing, and that this would not change her own appointment to the Commission.

Ms. Rogers discussed the decline of visibility and action of this Commission over the decades, noting that she had served on it at its inception. She indicated that there is much more that needs to be addressed between the cities and Borough to ensure this new effort is effective and lasting.

Ms. Sprinkle expressed appreciation in this amendment’s effort to further the conversation and open the door for refining the details while moving forward. She agreed that the meeting she attended with Ms. Tidwell was very helpful.

Mr. Cleworth indicated that he does not believe it was ever their intent that it had to be a member of the Council that was appointed to the Commission but rather that the makeup and selection process would mirror that of the Planning Commission. He stated that it sounds like there is interest in this being enacted and asked if that was correct. **Ms. Tidwell** clarified that the discussion regarding Commission makeup included specific seats for all three Mayors, or their designee, which would be relatively easy to implement and ensured representation for the City. She shared that they discussed resetting the Commission makeup to mirror the Planning Commission but that it would involve certain existing members being removed, which was an uncomfortable idea for many members. **Mr. Cleworth** stated that he likes things to be definitive and much of what is being considered is not so, citing Commission makeup and taxation power as very important things which should be easy to define. He expressed preference that representation for the cities of Fairbanks and North Pole be proportionate to their populations.

Mr. Ringstad agreed that the final phrase of the proposed Section 4 is pretty broad language and could result in any kind of makeup. He stated that proportional representation for the two cities, as stated in the original Section 2, would be prudent.

Ms. Sprinkle pointed out that if the ARDOR is moved away from the Borough, this entire Commission may not need to exist.

Ms. Tidwell explained that while they are removing the word “contingent” from the original Section 2, they are leaving in the sunset date to ensure that if the items they have discussed are not resolved, there will no longer be a Memorandum of Understanding. She added that this amendment allows the Borough to move forward and spend the money they have set aside for economic development within the City, which is currently held up. She stated that adding more language to

the end of Section 4 does create more work for the Borough but she believes it would still allow them to move forward.

Mr. Cleworth pointed out that the Borough has already set mill rates for the current year and that he does not believe they can go back for the fiscal year. He explained that any changes will not take effect until July 1, 2025, so he does not see why time is of the essence for spending money.

Ms. Tidwell reminded the Council that FEDC received funds through the Borough's budget which are currently restricted, unable to be used within the City due to the absence of an agreement such as this. She stated that there are additional funds that were previously cut from the budget that may also be reallocated if this agreement is approved.

Ms. Rogers expressed frustration at the feeling that the conversation was moving further from a solution. She indicated that some of the undertones ring less cooperative which unsettles her.

Ms. Sprinkle pointed out that J. Stewart earlier shared that the military represents approximately one third of the economic activity within the community and that Fort Wainwright is within City limits. She noted that FEDC's restrictions from Borough funds means that they cannot spend anything on matters that would incorporate this important reality.

Ms. Tidwell reiterated that this is not as complicated of an issue as they have made it. She addressed miscommunications that occurred early in the process such as getting the matter before the Council in a timely fashion and the Borough failing to communicate neither urgency nor consequences of a lack of signed agreement. She indicated that there is a tone to them not signing the agreement as well as including contingencies, and that she would like to move past these kinds of tones. She repeated that their primary concerns are still within the language of the amendment and that the sunset date is key to ensuring that the hope of working together is not just lip service.

Mr. Marney addressed the Council's recent attempts to extend olive branches which seem to always get voted down or disregarded by the Assembly. He asserted that this issue is not on the Council and that it is not unreasonable to have more clear language as Mr. Cleworth had shared.

Mr. Cleworth explained that the only language that had real teeth was the former Section 2, particularly regarding representation, and that it does not seem like a huge request. He noted that all other items are simply requests for information and commitment to working together. He stated that he believes someone at the Borough likely realized that a type of unauthorized taxation was happening to City residents. He suggested that, if so, perhaps they should ask for reimbursement. He discussed their fiduciary responsibility to the residents of the City of Fairbanks because this involves a tax and they deserve representation. Mr. Cleworth acknowledged that representation on the Commission has changed a lot over the years and that there has been no outreach from the Borough to ensure that the City is involved in a way it should be. He pointed out how this is their opportunity to ensure that they have a say on matters moving forward.

Mr. Ringstad indicated that while he agreed with Mr. Cleworth, the sunset date itself was another example of teeth and buys them some time. He suggested they do include language regarding representation proportionate to population, as a way to see if the Borough in fact would be willing to work with the cities towards a more balanced approach going forward. He stated that the history of economic development entities in the community has often been haphazard or nonexistent.

Ms. Rogers expressed support for what had been discussed but wanted to make sure they did nothing that would harm the ARDOR as that would include State-level considerations. She conveyed goals of seeking growth and prosperity for all of central Alaska. She stated that it is sometimes embarrassing to think of how much unfulfilled potential occurs within their region. She reiterated that whatever they agree to needs to be a real system where they work together.

Ms. Tidwell, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to AMEND the amendment on the floor by adding “by the City of North Pole and City of Fairbanks to be proportional to their populations.” to the end of Section 4.

Ms. Tidwell explained that their discussion had clarified the Council’s general preference regarding proportionate representation versus just having a Councilmember occupy a seat.

Mr. Ringstad agreed that this would be a better approach.

Mr. Cleworth pointed out that this Commission does not have any final authority and serves only in an advisory capacity. He indicated that he still prefers to keep the original contingency language.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND THE AMENDMENT TO RESOLUTION NO. 5116, AS AMENDED, BY ADDING “BY THE CITY OF NORTH POLE AND CITY OF FAIRBANKS TO BE PROPORTIONAL TO THEIR POPULATIONS.” TO THE END OF SECTION 4, AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Marney, Ringstad, Rogers, Tidwell

NAYS: Cleworth, Sprinkle

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

Ms. Sprinkle stated that, with the new amendment, she does not see how this will end up being any different than what they had originally passed.

Mr. Cleworth explained that the original Section 2 included their desires as contingencies for their agreement whereas the language of the new Section 4 is less definitive, stating that they “would like to work” with the Borough. He noted that if their preferences are not met, they will have already entered into the agreement and their only way out would be to wait until July 1, 2026.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND RESOLUTION NO. 5116, AS AMENDED, BY STRIKING SECTION 2, RENUMBERING THE REMAINING SECTIONS ACCORDINGLY, AND TO HAVE SECTION 4 READ: “THE CITY OF FAIRBANKS WOULD LIKE TO WORK COOPERATIVELY WITH THE FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE OF THE ARDOR, TO GET CLEAR RESOLUTION OF THE FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH’S TAXING AUTHORITY FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND TO ESTABLISH REPRESENTATION ON THE FNSB ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION BY THE CITY OF NORTH POLE AND CITY OF FAIRBANKS TO BE PROPORTIONAL TO THEIR POPULATIONS.”, AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Tidwell, Marney, Ringstad, Sprinkle, Rogers

NAYS: Cleworth
Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION NO. 5116, AS AMENDED, AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Tidwell, Marney, Ringstad, Sprinkle, Rogers
NAYS: Cleworth
Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and
Resolution No. 5116, as Amended, APPROVED.

- c) Ordinance No. 6287 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Section 2-149(e), Fiscal Note on Ordinances and Resolutions. Introduced by Council Member Cleworth. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6287.

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

Mr. Marney asked to be added as a sponsor to the Ordinance.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6287, AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Sprinkle, Rogers, Cleworth, Marney, Ringstad, Tidwell
NAYS: None
Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and
Ordinance No. 6287 ADOPTED.

- d) Ordinance No. 6288 – An Ordinance Establishing an Incentive Bonus Program Within the Fairbanks Public Works Department for Recruitment and Retention. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

Ms. Tidwell noted that she had declared a conflict of interest at the first reading of this Ordinance at the regular Council meeting of July 22, 2024. **Mayor Pruhs** affirmed the conflict of interest.

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Mr. Cleworth**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6288.

Mayor Pruhs called for Public Testimony.

Jeff Jacobson – J. Jacobson recounted how, as the former Director of Public Works, he began sounding the alarm 10 months prior about retention concerns at the department. He pointed out that over half of the employees at Public Works have zero to five years of experience, with most of that group actually having less than two years under their belt. He discussed the limited number of experienced staff being unable to handle the necessary training and mentoring for the larger group of less experienced members. J. Jacobson expressed appreciation that this Ordinance was before the Council and urged them to consider taking every opportunity to keep skilled workers at

the City, noting the significant losses over the last few years. He pointed out that there are still four vacancies for permanent positions.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if he thought the proposed incentive amounts would be enough to make people stay. J. Jacobson indicated that they had been given a dollar amount to work with. He stated that the City is outmatched by competing employers such as local businesses. He acknowledged that the Council did well in the last union contract but that the labor market blew it away.

Jeremiah Record – J. Record shared that as the shop maintenance foreman at Public Works, this Ordinance represented a stop-gap measure, although longer-term solutions needed to be discussed through their Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). He affirmed that they are bleeding talent and services are going to be impacted. He expressed hope for keeping the people they have and performing their operations on behalf of the City at the same, if not better, levels as the past.

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

Mayor Pruhs stated that he viewed this incentive program as a way to reinvest salary savings from the department to retain valuable personnel while they can. He indicated that some of these individuals are people he has known for 50 years. He referenced conversations with Operator Lead Myrlene Wheelock who trains equipment operators every year and has shared that they no longer get the cream of the crop. He noted that she, like many others at Public Works, could likely get a better job elsewhere but that they stay due to the camaraderie and pride in working for the City. Mayor Pruhs acknowledged that they are essentially putting on a band-aid until the CBA opens up but that this is a unique contract which requires them to be equal to all employees for matters such as this. He stated that he had provided a total dollar amount for them to work with and that they were empowered to determine how it should be distributed. He affirmed that the numbers within the Ordinance's attachment are what had been submitted in return.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if these funds were part of the Employee Capital Incentive Program (ECIP). **Mayor Pruhs** indicated that this was not an ECIP scenario and asked how much had been distributed in the previous year as part of the ECIP. Chief Financial Officer Margarita Bell reported that approximately \$65K was distributed in 2023, however no funds were allocated to personnel at Public Works. **Ms. Sprinkle** pointed out that the title of the Ordinance references recruitment but that it sounds like it is solely focusing on retention. **Mayor Pruhs** pointed out that the effective dates technically would allow for a new recruit to qualify for the bonuses if they were hired soon. He encouraged department administrators to market that aspect.

Ms. Rogers stated that she appreciated the testimony from J. Jacobson and J. Record. She discussed the importance of working together to address issues and move forward in the best way.

Mr. Marney shared his concerns about the bonuses being tied to longevity rather than positions. He noted that the stated challenge is losing higher-skilled positions that are vital to operations and so incentives should take into consideration a different ranking than just how long someone has worked for the department. He noted that losing a mechanic who maintains and repairs large equipment, or operators trained for snow removal, should be looked at differently than a custodian. Mr. Marney recounted meeting with department staff, along with Mr. Ringstad, and being told that this was not the answer but that health care issues needed fixed. He acknowledged having mixed

feelings on this but recognizes how much help they need. He concluded with praise for the great job they do every year despite the challenges they face.

Ms. Rogers expressed disapproval with Mr. Marney's comment about custodians being valued differently than those with higher-skilled positions. She stated that the department is strong as a team and they should not disrupt that.

Mr. Cleworth asserted that this Ordinance is written more like a longevity bonus rather than a retention bonus and that he has a problem with that. He indicated that some changes could be made to get it back on track.

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6288 by changing "apply retroactively to July 1" to "start on November 1" in Section 4.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6288 BY CHANGING "APPLY RETROACTIVELY TO JULY 1" TO "START ON NOVEMBER 1" IN SECTION 4, AS FOLLOWS:

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

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6288, as Amended, by striking the word "pro-rated" in the fourth statement of the Bonus Agreement (Attachment A).

Mr. Cleworth explained that if this is meant to be a retention bonus, it does not make any logical sense to have prorations. He stated that there is a lot of money involved with this, for which the City deserves a commitment, and that a department head cannot effectively plan without a sense of what that commitment might be. He gave an example of someone who plans to move in January taking the bonus now, while only having to pay back a portion, and the City being down another person in the middle of a snow clearing campaign.

Mayor Pruhs acknowledged that the previous amendment to change the effectiveness to November 1 supports this additional revision of removing the proration. He expressed hope that these commitments would help ensure personnel remain for this and the following winter.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6288, AS AMENDED, BY STRIKING THE WORD "PRO-RATED" IN THE FOURTH STATEMENT OF THE BONUS AGREEMENT (ATTACHMENT A), AS FOLLOWS:

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

Mr. Cleworth asked where the total dollar amount for this bonus effort came from. **Mayor Pruhs** replied that he produced the number, using about 30% of current salary savings, with the intention

of an additional bonus at the end of the year using additional savings. **Mr. Cleworth** reiterated that this is clearly set up as a longevity bonus and does not take into consideration the concerns about losing specialized positions where they are truly hurting the most, such as mechanics and operators. He asserted that they should be putting effort into the areas with the greatest concern. **Mayor Pruhs** shared that he had suggested sign-on bonuses for bringing in new mechanics but was told that other employees who have been there for years would be upset. **Mr. Cleworth** acknowledged that anytime they do bonuses for one department, which they started years ago and cannot seem to get away from, it will upset someone, either in that department or another. **Mayor Pruhs** pointed out that when they addressed retention in the police department last year, Mr. Cleworth's preference was to issue one-time bonuses rather than other potential incentive options, which is why he approached this department in the same way. **Mr. Cleworth** acknowledged that he understands what is trying to be accomplished and reiterated that he mostly does not like the way the funds are slated to be divided.

Ms. Sprinkle asked what would be the result of giving all employees the same amount for staying. **Mayor Pruhs** explained that he gave the total amount that would be available and the employees chose how to distribute funds in the way they felt would best retain staff.

Mr. Cleworth indicated that based on reports of past conversations, knowing that Councilmembers Marney and Ringstad have had more in-depth discussion with members of Public Works, he was expecting to hear more about health insurance coverage enhancements.

Mr. Ringstad explained that the whole situation is clear as mud, with four or five different unions involved, each with different health care packages in play. He noted that some of those arrangements could use help but others not as much. He admitted that he does not know enough about the details and that he is not sure there would even be a fair way to address this issue across the department. He stated that this should be looked more into when it's time to negotiate the CBA.

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6288, as Amended, by adding a Section 5, to read: "This program will take place of the Employee Capital Incentive Program (ECIP) for this year only."

Mr. Cleworth explained that this bonus will exhaust a large portion of their savings for the year and that typically they count on savings to cover additional equipment costs that were not originally budgeted, allowing the department to have the necessary tools to operate. He noted that they are taking away the lion's share of those funds through this bonus program and as such, another incentive such as the ECIP at the end of the year would be redundant. He pointed out that this bonus is still more lucrative than what the ECIP would be, which he supports for retention.

Mr. Ringstad asked to confirm how the ECIP was implemented last year. CFO Bell again reported that in 2023, a total of \$65K in ECIP funds were distributed across the City but that none were provided to any Public Works personnel.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6288, AS AMENDED, BY ADDING A SECTION 5, TO READ: "THIS PROGRAM WILL TAKE PLACE OF THE EMPLOYEE CAPITAL INCENTIVE PROGRAM (ECIP) FOR THIS YEAR ONLY.", AS FOLLOWS:

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

Mr. Cleworth indicated that he plans to vote for the Ordinance but with continued reservation about the division of funds. He acknowledged that the department personnel themselves had chosen this allocation split and asked if this was set in stone or if the employees could further revise the amounts if desired. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that upon adoption, the amounts would be set.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if Mr. Cleworth might be willing to share the reason behind his question. **Mr. Cleworth** stated that the bonuses are based on longevity and if this was truly an effort to incentivize retention for key positions and higher-skilled staff, the chart should be very different.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6288, AS AMENDED, AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Cleworth, Ringstad, Rogers, Sprinkle
NAYS: Marney
ABSTAIN: Tidwell
Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6288, as Amended, ADOPTED.

NEW BUSINESS

- a) Resolution No. 5133 – A Resolution Awarding a Contract to Sungard Public Sector in the Amount of \$430,670 for Fairbanks Emergency Communications Center (FECC) Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) Software Upgrade. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- b) Resolution No. 5134 – A Resolution Designating Check Signing Authority for Banking, Investment, and Custodial Accounts of the City of Fairbanks, Alaska. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA.

- c) Ordinance No. 6289 – An Ordinance Amending Schedule A of the Collective Bargaining Agreement Between the City of Fairbanks and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 1547 for the Code Compliance Inspector Position. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs and Council Member Sprinkle.

ADVANCED on the CONSENT AGENDA.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TO THE CITY COUNCIL

- a) Permanent Fund Review Board Meeting Minutes of April 24, 2024

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- b) Clay Street Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes of June 5, 2024

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- c) Appointment to the Discretionary Fund Committee

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. Ringstad reported that the Permanent Fund Committee recently met. He referenced financial summaries that were shared in a report and noted that when a new fund is established it is typically treated very conservatively in the early years. He pointed out that since certain policies changed in 2017, their annual rate of return has continued to grow. He shared their hope for more good years ahead and discussed intentions to pursue more aggressive investment opportunities while balancing out their risk.

Mr. Marney indicated that he had no report or additional comments.

Ms. Tidwell thanked the Council for its willingness to work through Resolution 5116 one more time and shared her optimism in a more cooperative future ahead between the City and Borough. She expressed gratitude that S. Fletcher would be introducing an Ordinance to remove the time constraints for representatives from the cities and school district during Assembly meetings.

Mr. Cleworth stated that the Ordinance S. Fletcher discussed would do well to also include an allowance for representatives in attendance at Assembly meetings to speak on any agenda items that affect their respective entities. He explained that currently they would have to vacate their representative seat to go speak at the public microphone, which seems inappropriate. He noted that this was only implemented a few years ago and it would be nice to see the upcoming Ordinance expand the allowances and return to past precedents. Mr. Cleworth stated he would like to see a compiled list of all changes that the Assembly and Planning Commission made to the Downtown Fairbanks 2040 Plan.

Ms. Rogers, recognizing that her time on the Council was coming to a close, gave individual messages of appreciation to her fellow Councilmembers. She also praised the staff of the City and expressed support for the Mayor's efforts to bring staff reports to their meetings. She stated she was proud to be a part of their group.

Ms. Sprinkle congratulated Victoria Dowling for her appointment to the Discretionary Fund Committee. She reported that the Chena Riverfront Commission needs additional members and extended an invitation for individuals to apply.

CITY CLERK'S REPORT

Clerk Snider shared that a number of vacancies exist across many boards and commissions. She explained how interested individuals can view those vacancies on the City website and how to submit an application to serve.

CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Attorney Chard thanked the Councilmembers for their service to the community.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to ENTER into an Executive Session to discuss *Eyre v. City of Fairbanks, et al.* and *Vlasakakis v. City of Fairbanks*.

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) *Eyre v. City of Fairbanks, et al.* (entered at 8:56 p.m.)

b) *Vlasakakis v. City of Fairbanks* (entered at 9:15 p.m.)

Mr. Cleworth brought the City Council out of the Executive Session, noting that the Council met in an Executive Session to discuss *Eyre v. City of Fairbanks, et al.* and *Vlasakakis v. City of Fairbanks*. He affirmed that no action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT

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

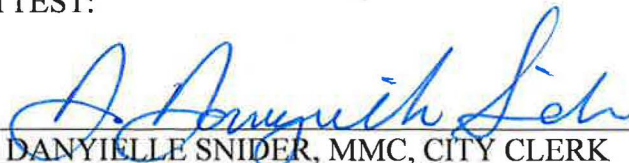
Mayor Pruhs called for objection and, hearing none, so ORDERED.

Mayor Pruhs declared the meeting adjourned at 9:27 p.m.



DAVID PRUHS, MAYOR

ATTEST:



D. DANYIELLE SNIDER, MMC, CITY CLERK

Transcribed by: CC