



FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES, JULY 30, 2024
FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
800 CUSHMAN STREET, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

The City Council convened at 7:00 a.m. on the above date to conduct a Special Meeting of the Fairbanks City Council at the City Council Chambers, 800 Cushman Street, Fairbanks, Alaska, with Mayor David Pruhs presiding and with the following Council Members 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
 Michael Sanders, Chief of Staff
 Margarita Bell, Chief Financial Officer
 Andrew Coccoaro, Fire Chief
 Jake Merritt, Human Resources Director
 Kristi Meredith, FECC Manager (remotely)

CITIZENS' COMMENTS – None

NEW BUSINESS

- a) Resolution No. 5131 – A Resolution Awarding a Contract to Braun Northwest in the Amount of \$337,260 for an Ambulance. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to APPROVE Resolution No. 5131.

Fire Chief Coccoaro shared details about the need for the ambulance as well as the research and bid process. He noted that the majority of the funds were included in the original 2024 budget and that the additional funds were approved in the last budget amendment. He indicated that Braun Northwest was able to provide an ambulance that met the Fire Department's specifications and is similar to a model the City purchased a few years ago with some important upgrades. He explained that order fulfillment for this kind of equipment can take a couple of years and that he was ready to make the purchase with the Council's approval of the resolution.

Ms. Sprinkle recalled a list of equipment needs for the Fire Department presented during the budget process in 2023 and asked if the ambulance fit into that list. Chief Coccoaro confirmed that the projected vehicle replacement schedule included the purchase in 2024 as well as the tender that will be discussed in the next resolution. He explained that the new ambulance will replace a 12-

year-old ambulance that is overdue for retirement. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked what would happen to the old ambulance. Chief Cocco shared that the City will likely sell it through the City's surplus auction process. He provided details on a plan to remount newer equipment in the future, only replacing chassis or other necessary systems, versus purchasing new units. He added that two of the department's ambulances are too old to refurbish.

Mr. Ringstad asked how many total ambulances the City currently has. Chief Cocco reported that there are three in service, one that is out of service but still stocked with supplies, and two that are in deep storage at Public Works. He noted that six total units in the future will be ideal as they will still be able to provide regular services and cover special events, even if one or two units are out of service. He shared that the plan involves one more purchase in the future, which he hopes will be covered in part by a grant application that has been submitted. He added that remounting units as needed will save up to 75% of the cost of a new vehicle in the current market.

Ms. Rogers if the City is able to provide older units to smaller, local agencies. Chief Cocco stated that whenever possible, before they place retired equipment into the surplus auction process, the City reaches out to local agencies to determine if there is an interest or need.

Mr. Cleworth asked if the six units included the bariatric ambulance. Chief Cocco shared that another agency purchased that unit in 2023. **Mr. Cleworth** suggested that auctioning retired equipment is ultimately the best option, as taxpayer money should not be used to purchase equipment that will ultimately be donated to another entity. He affirmed that the proceeds from auction sales are beneficial in replenishing the City's Capital Fund.

Mr. Marney asked how much a used ambulance typically sells for. Chief Cocco explained that the price varies widely and that location is a big factor. He stated that \$50,000 to \$60,000 is not an unreasonable sale price in the Lower 48 but that Interior Alaska is not a hot market for such equipment. He indicated that potential buyers, all of which are looking to spend as little as possible, include non-emergency transport companies, contractors, or food vendors looking to repurpose the vehicle. Chief Cocco confirmed that ambulances hold their value fairly well, but the market is finicky and he could not predict a sale price.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if unit numbers are reused after being sold or otherwise disposed. Chief Cocco explained that the numbering system assigns a new number to each new purchase in order to clearly track data on past units. He stated that "A12" will be the number for the new ambulance.

Ms. Tidwell expressed support for the purchase and hope that it would not take two years to arrive.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION NO. 5131 AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION PASSED and Resolution No. 5131 APPROVED.

- b) Resolution No. 5132 – A Resolution Awarding a Contract to SeaWestern Emergency Vehicles in the Amount of \$720,000 for a Water Tender. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to APPROVE Resolution No. 5132.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if funding for the equipment was previously budgeted or if it was a new request. **Mayor Pruhs** confirmed that the funds were already budgeted and that the quote goes up by \$100,000 as of August 1, which is the reason for the Special Meeting. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked if the new equipment would replace existing equipment. Chief Cocco explained that the new water tender would replace two very old, outdated tenders. He indicated that the better of those two will be retained as a backup unit, while the other would be used for parts. He explained that a tender brings a large volume of water and a pump to the scene of a fire. **Ms. Sprinkle** how far off the budget estimate was for the unit compared to the final quote. Chief Cocco indicated that the quote came in \$120,000 over the budgeted amount and that the difference was already accounted for with the budget amendment approved at the meeting. He reiterated that if they had waited to approve a resolution until the next meeting, the cost would have increased to \$220,000. He discussed how the unit is a very basic model, noting that custom tenders can cost up to \$1MM. He affirmed that this model would suit the department's needs and be within budgetary considerations.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION NO. 5132 AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION PASSED and Resolution No. 5132 APPROVED.

MAYOR AND COUNCILMEMBER COMMENTS

Ms. Sprinkle reported that she was at the last Borough Assembly meeting and was thrilled to see the Downtown Fairbanks 2040 Plan make it across the finish line.

Ms. Rogers and **Mr. Marney** each indicated that they had no comments.

Mr. Cleworth stated that he read the newspaper article about the Downtown Plan and the changes that were made by the Assembly. He asked if the Plan was now out of sync with the City's recommendations. **Mayor Pruhs** indicated that the Plan was now null and void as far as the City was concerned. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked why. **Mayor Pruhs** shared that he and Mr. Ringstad are scheduled to meet with the Director and Deputy Director of the Borough's Planning Department to discuss the matter.

Mr. Ringstad, referencing the scheduled price increase of the water tender quote, stated that he would happily come to a 7:00 a.m. meeting anytime in order to save the City \$100,000.

Ms. Tidwell reported that while attending the last Assembly meeting as the Council's representative, she heard discussion on the Borough's effort to research moving to a by-mail voting

process for future elections. She shared that she requested that the Assembly consider the impact to the City given the two entities' collaboration in holding elections on the same day. She discussed the Downtown Plan changes and confirmed that two items the Council had considered contingent for its approval had been disregarded. She stated that while the Borough is the entity that adopts the Plan, the Planning Department has acknowledged that it is very important that it is approved by the City. She expressed hope that they can work towards an amicable resolution.

Mr. Cleworth asked what the rationale was for taking out the reference to the mining heritage and history in the establishment of Fairbanks. **Ms. Tidwell** stated that there was not much discussion on the matter and that the items the City had put forth were also supported by the Planning Commission. She shared that the Assembly did not consider the language appropriate for that section and struck it entirely.

Ms. Rogers asked if Ms. Tidwell had to go the public comment microphone to convey the City's stance. **Ms. Tidwell** shared that she included her comments at the start of the meeting during her report. She stated that she did not stay for the whole meeting and that the Assembly had declined to move the discussion on the Downtown Plan to an earlier place in the agenda. **Mayor Pruhs** noted that other agenda items that came before the Plan took up a lot of time and that he supported Ms. Tidwell not staying until 2:30 a.m. when the meeting concluded.

Mr. Cleworth asked for more details on what the Assembly is doing on the issue of by-mail voting. **Ms. Tidwell** shared that it was just a resolution to direct the Borough Clerk to research the idea. **Mr. Cleworth** asked if the City Clerk had discussed the item with the Borough Clerk. City Clerk Snider shared that while she had not had any communication about this particular resolution, she and the Borough Clerk participated in a community discussion at the university a few months back, hosted by the League of Women Voters, which outlined what a by-mail election might look like. She added that it was an informational presentation and that the Borough's resolution was the first of any action taken on the subject that she was aware of. She stated that she will engage with the Borough Clerk to discuss the matter further.

Ms. Tidwell reported that the Assembly also discussed a property tax credit which was referred to the Economic Development Commission for further consideration. She noted that, being on that Commission, she would be able to share updates after meetings. She indicated that having a mirrored program at the City could be beneficial as residents would feel some consistency.

Mr. Marney asked how the Assembly voted on the Downtown Plan. **Mr. Cleworth** shared that he had read that the amendment regarding striking the mining heritage language was 5-4.

Mayor Pruhs shared that in the week prior, he was asked to be available to participate in the Assembly's Work Session to take questions about the Downtown Plan, which he did. He reported that Assemblymember Scott Crass had asked him why the City had chosen to insert the language about the mining history. **Mayor Pruhs** indicated that he explained how the language had been proposed by the Planning Commission and supported by the City Council as an important element of Fairbanks history. He confirmed that the Assembly was aware of the Council's resolution and contingencies for its approval of the Plan and that the City's conditions had been violated. He explained that the result is that the Council's acceptance of the Plan is nullified. He discussed how

the City plays a crucial role in the implementation of the Plan. **Mayor Pruhs** concluded by sharing that he had spoken to a realtor, Robert Fox Jr., who specializes in land sales within the Fairbanks North Star Borough. He stated that he asked R. Fox Jr. for a valuation on the property at Front Street and Hamilton and committed to sharing the results with the Council.

Ms. Sprinkle confirmed that the Assembly meeting went very late into the night. She stated that she got the impression that while they removed the language about mining from the land acknowledgment segment, she is not sure if the Assembly is opposed to the language itself. **Mayor Pruhs** reminded the Council that the Assembly removed the language entirely, rather than moving it to another section. He reiterated that the document, as far as the City is concerned, is null and void at this time. **Ms. Sprinkle** expressed disappointment at that result but committed to waiting to see how the situation evolves. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that such was a consequence of an action, that he had been very clear in his answers to the Assembly's questions at their work session, and that they knew what they were doing. He discussed the City's involvement in the majority of the aspects of the downtown area that the Plan addresses. He affirmed that regardless of the situation, the City will continue to move forward with developing the downtown area through a variety of efforts. He declared that personally, professionally, and as the Mayor, he was not concerned about this Plan being adopted and reaffirmed that the City is doing its part already.

Mr. Marney expressed gratitude for the relationship the Council has amongst its members as well as the body's commitment to how it engages with citizens. He expressed disappointment with the dysfunction that appears to be prevalent with the Borough Assembly. **Mayor Pruhs** thanked Mr. Marney for acknowledging the difference between the Council and the Assembly. **Ms. Rogers** concurred with the assessment of the mutual respect Councilmembers share and stated that pathways of disagreement always manage to come together for the benefit of the community.

ADJOURNMENT


Mayor Pruhs declared the meeting adjourned at 7:32 a.m.



For

DAVID PRUHS, MAYOR

ATTEST:



D. DANYELLE SNIDER, MMC, CITY CLERK

Transcribed by: CC