



FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, JUNE 24, 2024  
FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
800 CUSHMAN STREET, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

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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 at the City Council Chambers, 800 Cushman Street, Fairbanks, Alaska, with Mayor David Pruhs presiding and with 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  
   Michael Sanders, Chief of Staff  
   Thomas Chard, City Attorney  
   Margarita Bell, Chief Financial Officer (remotely)  
   Ron Dupee, Police Chief  
   Richard Sweet, Deputy Police Chief  
   Nathan Werner, Police Captain  
   Gray Harrison, Police Officer  
   Bryan Santiago, Police Officer  
   Teal Soden, Public Information Officer  
   Andrew Coccaro, Fire Chief  
   Clem Clooten, Building Official  
   Jake Merritt, Human Resources Director  
   Brynn Butler, Housing Coordinator (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)**

Police Chief Dupee introduced two recent lateral-transfer officers: Bryan Santiago and Gray Harrison. Deputy Police Chief Richard Sweet gave background information about both officers' careers and administered the Oath of Office.

## 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.]*

Jay Ramras – J. Ramras shared details about the rededication of the Noel Wien Library and an upcoming event to commemorate the historic flight of Noel Wien in July 1924, which opened up commercial aviation in Interior Alaska. He shared historical tidbits about changes in aviation in the Fairbanks area throughout the 1900's and extended an invitation to the Centennial event.

Charity Gadapee, Director of Visitor and Community Engagement of Explore Fairbanks – G. Gadapee shared an update on visitor industry statistics year-to-date, noting a significant increase from 2023, though still below pre-COVID numbers. She discussed Aurora-viewing trips already being planned for winter. She reviewed Explore Fairbanks' Associate Program, which allows businesses to receive free advertising in publications. She concluded with a summary of Explore Fairbanks' community engagement efforts.

**Ms. Rogers** asked how many military members have participated in city tours for new soldiers. C. Gadapee shared that they have hosted about 1,300 in 2024 and a total of 4,600 to date.

Linda Hebert – L. Hebert stated that it has been two weeks since she spoke at the last City Council meeting to address the excessive noise in her neighborhood from the Boatel Bar. She indicated that she has yet to be contacted with any update after the meeting with the owners that the Mayor claimed to have scheduled. She added that there has been no improvement with the situation. She asked if the City had any intentions of setting decibel level restrictions. She shared that over the last weekend, music was still playing at 1:30 a.m., which prompted her to call the police. She expressed frustration at the bar's owners' seeming lack of regard for the law or their neighbors. L. Hebert reported that at approximately 11:00 p.m., a loud announcement could be heard from the outdoor speakers at the Boatel, informing patrons that the music would continue and directing them by saying: "Let's give a big loud shout, yell, whatever it takes, so that you can heard by the neighbors over there." She shared that after calling the police at 1:30 a.m. another announcement was heard saying they had to quit playing "because of the neighbors." She pointed out that the noise variance permit should last only until 1:00 a.m. and that she has been told permits can be revoked if there are violations or too many complaints. She stated that despite years of complaints, she is not aware of this ever being enforced and questioned whether there is favoritism at play.

**Mayor Pruhs** reported that he did in fact speak with the owners of the Boatel Bar, directing them to turn the volume down at 11:00 p.m. He acknowledged that according to L. Hebert's testimony, they did not heed this instruction, and he will begin applying more pressure and review their schedule of future events. He committed to implementing additional action to ensure compliance with the parameters of variance permits, including a visit by the police to remind them to turn the volume down at the appropriate time. He concurred that residents in the neighborhood have rights and that enough is enough. He stated that his first chat with the owners was polite but the time for polite discussions was now over. L. Hebert added that traffic concerns also exist, including parking in front of fire hydrants and in spaces marked as "No Parking." **Mayor Pruhs** confirmed that both are towable offenses, that he would be meeting with the Police Chief the following day, and that all items would be discussed.

Victor Buberger – V. Buberger shared that he met someone recently who thought the GARS intersection was an improvement. He asked the Council if they had any data yet on the accidents at the intersection or whether the lights on the Old Steese Highway had been repaired yet.

Olivia Rodriguez – O. Rodriguez stated that she was representing Golden Heart Consulting, which contracted with the Downtown Association of Fairbanks to plan the Midnight Sun Festival. She extended their deepest gratitude to the City, specifically the police, fire, and public works departments, for their invaluable contributions to the success of the 2024 festival. She discussed these departments' efforts in helping create a special day for the community and added appreciation for Tyler Wilbur from the City's Engineering Department for a smooth permitting process. She spoke about how the festival supports local economic growth and development and thanked everyone involved.

**Mr. Cleworth** asked O. Rodriguez if there was any problem obtaining insurance for the event. O. Rodriguez replied that there was not, though they did have to shop around. She noted that the presence of the two downtown patrol officers during the event was a huge help.

**Mr. Marney** asked O. Rodriguez if they had attendance numbers yet. O. Rodriguez shared that an estimated 30,000 people attended and shared details about some logistical changes in 2024.

David van den Berg, Executive Director of the Downtown Association of Fairbanks – D. van den Berg echoed O. Rodriguez's appreciation of the City for its help with the Midnight Sun Festival. He pointed out the amazing wrap-up efforts that got the area back to normal in a short time. He praised the effort by the Council to improve the city through addressing derelict buildings and noted that planning the festival to occur during Phase 1 of the Polaris Building demolition was much more feasible than it would have been in Phase 2. He discussed the complex planning that goes into the festival and the support from various departments. D. van den Berg acknowledged that the event creates an expense for the City. He questioned whether the event costs departments more than the budgeted amount and, if so, whether the overage can be covered by bed tax revenue.

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

## **APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA**

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

**Ms. Sprinkle** pulled New Business item 12(b), Resolution No. 5127, from the consent agenda.

**Mr. Cleworth** pulled Resolution No. 5126 and Ordinance No. 6283, items 12(a) and 12(c) respectively, under New Business, from the consent agenda.

**Ms. Tidwell** pulled Written Communications to the City Council item 13(b), "Memorandum Authorizing Fire Department Position Change," from the consent agenda.

**Mr. Marney** pulled New Business item 12(e), Ordinance No. 6285, 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.

### **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
3118	VFW Post #3629	Club	VFW Post #3629	324 2nd Street
3151	Fred Meyer #485	Package Store	Fred Meyer Stores, Inc.	3755 Airport Way
4846	Wal-Mart Supercenter #2722	Package Store	Walmart, Inc.	537 Johansen Expressway
3170	The Odom Corporation	General Wholesale	The Odom Corporation	3101 Peger Road, Bay 1
3969	Tony's Sports Bar	Beverage Dispensary	JNJ, Inc.	537 Gaffney Road, Suite 1
4232	The Spur	Beverage Dispensary	JNJ, Inc.	537 Gaffney Road

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

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

**Ms. Sprinkle** asked if there was any way to filter the callout reports to only show calls that pertain to alcohol licensees, noting the lengthy report of unrelated calls at Wal-Mart Supercenter. **Mayor Pruhs** indicated that the purpose of the report is to see all calls at the address associated with the licensee. **Ms. Sprinkle** expressed frustration that the information was not filtered.

**Mr. Marney** recalled a past Council decision to issue citations for trespassing offenses and asked for clarification on how that interacts with the calls on the reports. City Attorney Tom Chard indicated he was unsure but that they could revisit the issue later.

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

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

NAYS: None

**Mayor Pruhs** declared the MOTION CARRIED.

- b) The Fairbanks City Council held a public hearing to determine the costs and method of recovery of costs for the abatement of 719 Front Street (Lot 18, Tract, Graehl Townsite), Fairbanks, Alaska. The purpose of the hearing was to:
1. Hear and consider any written objections or protests to the proposed report.
  2. Make such revision, correction, or modification to the report or to the charges as the City Council may deem just.
  3. Confirm or reject the report; and
  4. Determine whether to assign a personal obligation of the property owner and/or to create a lien against the property.



**Mr. Ringstad**, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to CONFIRM that the report was in order.

**Mayor Pruhs** indicated that the item does not require a public hearing and asked the City Clerk if she had received any written objections or protests. Clerk Snider stated she had not.

**Ms. Sprinkle** asked how the property owner is contacted in such a process. Clerk Snider explained that communication is sent via USPS certified mail and that the City has done its due diligence per the Fairbanks General Code (FGC). Attorney Chard clarified that the FGC requires the City to send correspondence via certified mail, although it does not require proof of delivery or a signed return receipt. He added that public notice is also published in the newspaper. **Ms. Sprinkle** stated that she wanted to confirm that the City did everything it could to contact the owner before taking action. Clerk Snider indicated that before reaching this step, she followed up with the Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) to confirm that there were no changes in contact information since the Building Official last contacted the property owner.

**Mr. Ringstad** asked if the process is first a motion to confirm that the report is in order, then a motion to determine what the Council would like to do to recoup the cost. Clerk Snider confirmed that that is the process set forth in the City Abatement Code.

**Mr. Marney** asked if the intent is to use the same process for properties associated with Ordinance No. 6284, to prevent and address blight. **Mayor Pruhs** confirmed that the intent is to be consistent with the City's communication practices to property owners when issues are raised. **Mr. Marney** asked what would happen then. Attorney Chard explained that the City follows a similar path as outlined in the FGC for nuisance properties. He indicated that the process involves a lot of communication to the owner and legal considerations with each step in the process. He affirmed that the City does an excellent job to meet those obligations and that they strive to balance property owners' rights against efforts to better the community.

**Ms. Rogers** noted that the lack of response from the owner is concerning and asked how the Council can determine the validity of the process. She expressed her view that a notice of receipt is a vital part of these kinds of situations. She asked when the last time the applicable section of Code was reviewed. Attorney Chard replied that the *Abatement of Dangerous Buildings* Code is from 2015 and was updated at least once shortly thereafter. He affirmed that as a practice, staff goes above and beyond what the Code requires to find the owner and verify contact information as best they can. He acknowledged that a non-response from individuals means they either did not receive it or they received it and ignored it. Attorney Chard explained that if the City has done its due diligence per the Code and an owner later claims that they received no notice, there is an appeal process available. He stated that is standard throughout multiple areas in the Code, but the Council may pursue changes, if desired. **Ms. Rogers** thanked Attorney Chard for the explanation and recalled that a few years back the Council reached a crucial point in a similar situation only to find that the owner was an elderly individual who no longer lived in the country.

**Ms. Sprinkle** acknowledged that sometimes people do not relish the receipt of certified mail as it is often tied to unpleasant news. She recounted that the owner in this case has participated in communication with the City about the property. She indicated that confirming the address of record with the Borough is sufficient, as that is the same address used for property taxes. She indicated that the owner knows what is happening and that a non-response should not put an undue burden on the City or the Council.

**Ms. Rogers** clarified that her comments pertain to the overall process and not the specific report.

**Mr. Ringstad** pointed out that a lien for the property would be going to an estate in Washington, so it would be handled by someone at some point. He asked for the motion on the floor to be restated, and the Clerk obliged. **Mayor Pruhs** noted that estates are handled within the state where the property exists, so any lien would be known and resolved before the property can be discharged. He affirmed that the City has performed its duty to notify the owner.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO CONFIRM THAT THE REPORT WAS IN ORDER AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

**Mayor Pruhs** declared the MOTION CARRIED.

**Mayor Pruhs** acknowledged that the procedure is not a common one for the Council. He stated that as it happens more, the Council will have a greater understanding of and preference regarding the procedure. He added that each property situation is different and will be handled accordingly.

**Mr. Ringstad**, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to ASSIGN a lien against the property and/or make the charge a personal obligation of the owner.

**Mr. Ringstad** discussed the lien of \$62K matches the cost the City incurred in dealing with the property. He stated that the land itself may not even be worth that much but that this is the amount they should pursue. He suggested the owner may ultimately just deed the land to the City.

**Mayor Pruhs** noted that the City owns another lot across the street from this and so they will need to discuss soon how they intend to discharge properties.

**Ms. Sprinkle** addressed the large lien amount by recalling the massive undertaking to clear out derelict structures as well as more debris and trash than anyone could have imagined.

Attorney Chard asked for clarification on the motion to determine if they will be placing a lien against the estate or a personal obligation of the owner. **Mr. Ringstad** suggested that they do both simultaneously so they can initiate discussion with the estate itself, as efforts thus far had been limited to the owner. Attorney Chard indicated that he would verify that doing both is legal. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that no matter what, their mechanics direct that a lien goes against the property first.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ASSIGN A LIEN AGAINST THE PROPERTY AND/OR MAKE THE CHARGE A PERSONAL OBLIGATION OF THE OWNER AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

**Mayor Pruhs** declared the MOTION CARRIED.

## **MAYOR'S COMMENTS AND REPORT**

**Mayor Pruhs** congratulated Deputy Chief Sweet for graduating from the FBI National Academy.

## **COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS**

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

**Mr. Ringstad** shared that the sentiment expressed by L. Hebert is unanimous with those he has had contact with who live in the area of the Boatel Bar and that residents have been waiting a long time for something to be done. He shared his own experiences with strangers being found passed out in his driveway, as well as finding homeless camps in the local park (named after his great-grandmother) near where children play and close to an elementary school. He stated that if the City has rules and laws, they must be enforced.

**Ms. Sprinkle** expressed appreciation for the City's support of the Midnight Sun Festival and stated that the entire weekend made her feel a great deal of pride for the community.

**Ms. Rogers** thanked the Mayor for his commitments to address L. Hebert's concerns and agreed that it is time to look at enforcement. She discussed the history of the Boatel Bar and how it has dramatically changed over the years. She expressed doubt that the original owners would approve of the current situation and stated that mocking neighbors over a loudspeaker was outrageous. **Mayor Pruhs** reiterated that the owners will get another chance but only with reduced volume from 11:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m.

**Mr. Cleworth** asked if the FGC allows for essentially any type of noise until 11:00 p.m., with a waiver being required thereafter. **Mayor Pruhs** confirmed. **Mr. Cleworth** discussed the original sternwheeler boat that was the Boatel and the double-edged sword of a booming business that is close to a neighborhood. He expressed hope that the Boatel Bar can eventually have the building expanded to include additional enclosures for these types of events. He acknowledged the attractiveness of the venue and the experience it offers for customers.

**Ms. Rogers** asked to confirm that there are no noise restrictions until 11:00 p.m. **Mayor Pruhs** confirmed that is correct. He discussed the need to review and update the FGC regarding noise issues, potential decibel level constraints, and other parameters.

**Mr. Cleworth** addressed the question from D. van den Berg about excessive costs to specific City departments due to the Midnight Sun Festival and stated he believes bed tax funds can be used to cover many of the expenses. Chief of Staff Mike Sanders indicated that costs incurred due to the loss or replacement of barricades or equipment or for City staff overtime may be covered by those funds. CFO Bell confirmed that the City will use the 7% bed tax allocation for barricades and safety-related costs. **Mr. Cleworth** spoke of the changes in the planning for and layout of the event in recent years, noting that it was a real improvement for downtown businesses.

**Mayor Pruhs** affirmed that there are internal processes to audit the use of bed tax funds and to ensure compliance. **Ms. Sprinkle** pointed out that the City is using the 7% to provide for safety during events, but the economic drive of the past weekend is well worth the investment.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- a) Resolution No. 5116 – 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. POSTPONED from the Regular Meeting of May 20, 2024.

*[Clerk Note: At the April 22, 2024 regular City Council meeting, Mr. Cleworth, seconded by Ms. Sprinkle, moved to APPROVE Resolution No. 5116. The motion remained on the floor.]*

**Mayor Pruhs** reminded the Council that there is an upcoming work session on the resolution.

**Ms. Sprinkle**, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to POSTPONE Resolution No. 5116 to the July 22, 2024 Regular City Council Meeting.

**Mr. Cleworth** asked if the City is still waiting for information from the Borough on the taxation component. CFO Bell stated she has received the information and is ready for the work session.

**Mayor Pruhs** asked Councilmembers to send him any remaining questions they may have about the agreement so the information can be compiled and addressed in order at the work session.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO POSTPONE RESOLUTION NO. 5116 TO THE JULY 22, 2024 REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Sprinkle, Rogers, Cleworth, Ringstad, Marney

NAYS: Tidwell

**Mayor Pruhs** declared the MOTION CARRIED.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- a) Resolution No. 5126 – A Resolution Awarding a Contract to Long Building Technologies, Inc. for Security Upgrades at the Fire Training Center in the Amount of \$304,044. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

**Mr. Cleworth**, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to APPROVE Resolution No. 5126.

**Mr. Cleworth** asked if any entities are still using the Fire Training Center (FTC) tower for training. M. Sanders indicated that the tower is still occasionally used, including by one other fire department so far this year. He clarified that almost no one is using the building that the resolution addresses. **Mr. Cleworth** asked where the other entities are going now for training facilities instead of the FTC. Fire Chief Cocco shared that some departments will still use the facility when they need to do a tower simulation. He added that over the years, many organizations have built their own training facilities and have less need for classroom space. **Mr. Cleworth** addressed the overall poor condition of the building and asked how much more work is needed to make the facility usable after the upgrades outlined in the resolution are complete. M. Sanders explained that the resolution is for a security upgrade, which is the first step, and it will be followed by an RFP for the installation of servers and other computer equipment to serve as a training center for dispatch services. He acknowledged that it will be an expensive project, primarily because the

building has not been upgraded since 1988. **Mr. Cleworth** asked if another resolution is foreseen to provide additional funds for further building repairs from the wear and tear over the years. M. Sanders noted that \$680,000 had already been approved for the project and that the cost for the remaining stages will likely not be high enough to reach the Council level. **Mr. Cleworth** asked what is envisioned for the building. M. Sanders described the spaces within the structure and outlined plans for a server room, with the rear classroom as a dedicated space for dispatch training and a backup dispatch center. He added that the main classroom would be set up for modern training sessions which he believes would see a fair amount of use both internally and externally. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked whether other dispatch groups would be able to use the training space. M. Sanders explained that City dispatchers are the only ones accredited who also use the specific types of systems that will be set up at the training facility.

**Mr. Ringstad** asked for additional information on the next phase where equipment will be installed. M. Sanders explained that when the next regular Fairbanks Emergency Communications Center (FECC) upgrade occurs, some of the equipment will be transferred to the FTC; however, an appropriate server room is needed first. He noted that there will be additional costs, but he anticipates grant funding will assist with costs in the later stages.

**Mr. Marney** expressed gratitude to see the project come to fruition, noting that the status quo is not working. He asked whether FECC Manager Kristi Merideth supports the project. M. Sanders indicated that K. Merideth is pretty excited about it.

**Mr. Cleworth** asked whether there are still dispatchers working offsite. M. Sanders confirmed that several dispatchers who used to be local have continued to work remotely from all over the country due to staffing shortages. He noted that the approach is not sustainable.

**Mr. Ringstad** indicated that he has been concerned by the number [six] of remote dispatchers and acknowledged that the City will not be able to work out of the situation until there is a way to hire and train more local people. He stated that he hopes the project will help.

**Mr. Cleworth** expressed his desire to use space in City Hall for training. He bemoaned how the FTC has cost the City millions in contamination expenses. He suggested that the City may be putting a lot of money into a building that has outlived its purpose and may continue to have problems. He mentioned that an addition at Public Works was once proposed for a dispatch training center. **Ms. Sprinkle** pointed out that City Hall also costs a lot to repair and maintain.

**Mr. Ringstad** asked if it would be prudent to place the backup dispatch center near the FECC. Chief Cocco explained that from an emergency management perspective, it is prudent to have a backup location within the jurisdiction but removed from the original site, rather than right next door. He added that all things considered, the FTC is an ideal location for a backup center. He acknowledged that the FTC has issues needing remediation but is in better condition than others. He stated that the City will only be limited by its imagination and willingness to move forward. He discussed the facility's potential to become a wide-serving public safety training location for the region, especially with improvements to the law enforcement driving pad.

**Ms. Rogers** recalled the devastating flood of 1967 and cited the benefits of a separate location.



**Mr. Cleworth** asked how many consoles are envisioned at the backup center. M. Sanders stated that it would likely house eight, but four-to-six consoles is realistic. He reiterated that the equipment would be cycled out of what is currently being used at the FECC. **Mr. Cleworth** noted that they replace the equipment every 10 years or so and that it costs about a million dollars. He asked whether the FTC equipment would also have to be replaced if it is meant to serve as a backup dispatch center. M. Sanders stated the equipment should still be functional and that the primary purpose is to recreate a comparable training setting, with multiple monitors and communication equipment, rather than a single laptop and headset. **Mr. Cleworth** questioned the need to replace equipment every 10 years if the old equipment is still suitable. **Mayor Pruhs** clarified that the idea of a backup center is for the resources used to be sufficient, though not ideal, serving only to cover a gap until the primary facility is restored. **Mr. Cleworth** addressed the driving pad at FTC and recalled hearing that the soil was not suitable for the uses Chief Cocco had mentioned. **Mayor Pruhs** confirmed that the City Engineer was looking into the issue.

**Mr. Ringstad** shared that one issue K. Merideth has raised is that current training capabilities only allows them to train two people at a time, but this project could double that and accelerate training.

**Mayor Pruhs** acknowledged the fruitful discussion of future plans. He reiterated that this is a structure that the City already owns, and it will serve a vital role. He stated that an affirmative vote on this begins a commitment to a larger strategy.

**Mr. Cleworth** expressed that he is torn on the issue, citing reciprocity between Fairbanks and Mat-Su for backup dispatch centers. He noted the benefit of the FTC for dispatch training and the importance of utilizing existing structures. He stated that it would be interesting to know whether the City even has rights to sell the property, or if anyone would even be interested in it. He expressed disappointment in the high expectations for the building that never came to fruition and bemoaned the idea of putting more money into what is now a liability. He acknowledged the work that had gone into the proposed plan and thanked everyone for the chance to share his thoughts.

**Ms. Rogers** pointed out that this kind of project, and the associated funding, could be just what is needed to reach the tipping point for greater success with the facility.

**Mr. Cleworth** added that years ago the City looked at UAF as a backup location due to its higher elevation. He noted that the FTC is in the same floodplain as the downtown area, which concerns him. M. Sanders stated that the current dispatch center and its associated servers are all on the second floor of the FECC and should still be operational in the event of a flood.

**Ms. Rogers** spoke to how flooding is not the only hypothetical disaster that could occur.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION NO. 5126 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Marney, Ringstad, Tidwell, Rogers, Sprinkle

NAYS: Cleworth

**Mayor Pruhs** declared the MOTION CARRIED and Resolution No. 5126 APPROVED.



- b) Resolution No. 5127 – A Resolution Approving Updates to the City of Fairbanks Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

**Ms. Sprinkle**, seconded by **Mr. Cleworth**, moved to APPROVE Resolution No. 5127.

**Ms. Sprinkle** noted that the EOP is a massive document and asked for an introduction.

**M. Sanders** explained that after years hoping the City might receive grant funding to help overhaul its outdated EOP, staff realized the project needed to be tackled internally. He shared that as staff went through the plan with a fine-toothed comb, they confirmed that the bones were really good for a ten-year-old document. He stated that staff reviewed and updated the EOP as necessary to ensure it can actually be used in an emergency.

**Mayor Pruhs** acknowledged that the EOP is a very large document and stated that the Council can take all the time it needs to review it.

**Mr. Marney**, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to POSTPONE Resolution No. 5127 to the July 22, 2024 Regular City Council Meeting.

**Ms. Rogers** expressed appreciation for the work that had gone into updating the plan.

**Mr. Ringstad** shared his experience with learning the importance of EOPs through his work in the oil industry and affirmed the need for regular review and updates.

**Ms. Sprinkle** recalled asking about the City's emergency plan after the devastating fires in Maui, HI in 2023. She asked if such a crisis was addressed in the EOP. Fire Chief Cocco explained that the EOP is a general guide for any mass disaster in the City, and it outlines broad responsibilities and authorities for individual departments without getting into specifics for any particular type of event. He stated that a good EOP should be reviewed every year as agreements with partner organizations evolve.

**Mr. Ringstad** discussed the importance of having a clear management structure available before a disaster hits. Chief Cocco agreed, noting that the EOP is part of a bigger FEMA concept and identifies roles, responses, and responsibilities. He explained a vital aspect of a good plan is that everyone who has a role knows that they do and knows how to access the plan. He indicated that the plan is solid compared to many he has seen and reiterated that it will continue to change.

**Mr. Cleworth** stated that he would like to ask some additional questions if permitted but noted that the current discussion was out of order as the motion on the floor was to postpone the resolution. **Mayor Pruhs** acknowledged that the City Attorney had pointed that out to him but indicated that he would allow discussion to continue. Attorney Chard clarified that some discussion about the EOP was in order as it could provide Councilmembers relevant information to decide how to vote on the question of postponement. He advised the Council to not get too far down the rabbit hole of any specific topic or wordsmithing.

**Mr. Cleworth** asked who would be the City's Emergency Operations Coordinator (EOC), as listed in the flowchart on page 17. **M. Sanders** stated that it would be Chief Cocco. Chief Cocco confirmed that the EOC role would likely defer to the Fire Chief depending on the type and size

of the event. **Mr. Cleworth** shared that years ago there had been some disputes where the Borough had asserted that leadership would fall to them, with the City operating under the Borough's direction. He noted that it sounds as though that idea has gone away and asked if the Borough had a similar plan in place or in production. Chief Cocco clarified that the Borough is still having conversations on many topics but the City having its own plan is still important. He stated he has had conversations with the Borough's emergency operations team but that the City's EOP would not take away from or add to that discussion. He reminded the Council that Fairbanks is a full-service City and there are possible events that may activate the EOP without involving the Borough, State, or Federal government. **Mr. Cleworth** indicated that he is a strong proponent of the City taking responsibility for itself whenever possible and that his concern is about turf disputes over who calls the shots. M. Sanders concurred that the City's plan does not take away from the Borough's. He gave examples from recent years, such as periods of major snowfall, when the City declared an emergency for situations that did not impact the Borough enough to see the same action taken at that level. **Mr. Cleworth** asked, in the event of a Borough-wide emergency, where the center of command would be and who would be in charge. M. Sanders indicated that if the Borough declares an emergency, the City would be looped into the Borough's plan. **Mr. Cleworth** asked whether that was the proper methodology. Chief Cocco responded that it would depend on many factors, which likely were not suited for the present discussion. He confirmed that coordination will always happen.

**Mayor Pruhs** declared that the discussion had veered too far from the motion to postpone and asked if there were any other items to address pertaining to the question to postpone. There was no further discussion.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO POSTPONE RESOLUTION NO. 5127 TO THE JULY 22, 2024 REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

**Mayor Pruhs** declared the MOTION CARRIED and Resolution No. 5127 POSTPONED.

- c) Ordinance No. 6283 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code by Enacting Section 10-207 to Require That Vacant Buildings Be Secured and Registered and Establishing Fines for Violations of These Requirements. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs and Council Members Sprinkle and Ringstad.

**Ms. Sprinkle**, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to ADVANCE Ordinance No. 6283.

**Mr. Cleworth** stated that he was happy to see the ordinance and the next two ordinances at the last work session. He indicated that Ordinance No. 6283 gives him heartburn, primarily due to the methodology of going after things with a stick rather than a carrot. He expressed distaste in requiring people to register a vacant building and to be required to pay to do so. He suggested a better approach would be asking owners to register a vacant building while also allowing them to give advance consent for the police to enter the property in the owner's absence if need be. He stated that he wants owners to participate in the program but does not agree with charging the fees.

**Mayor Pruhs** expressed agreement with Mr. Cleworth and conveyed his desire for the ordinance to be postponed until November. He explained that the City is hiring for a newly created position that will be working in this area and that he would like that individual to have the chance to have input on how the program will be shaped. He acknowledged that of the three ordinances before the Council, Ordinance No. 6283 appears the most intrusive at the surface level.

**Mr. Ringstad** agreed that the ordinance gives him some uncomfortable feelings and expressed concern over unintended consequences. He spoke in favor of having a registry of vacant buildings.

**Ms. Sprinkle** acknowledged that the Council could refine the ordinance but indicated that she would not like to wait until November to see it put into motion. **Mayor Pruhs** reiterated that he would like the operational input of whomever is hired to fill the new role, giving them at least two months to become comfortable with the implementation. He added that the Council's plate is also getting very full for the next couple months.

**Ms. Rogers** spoke in favor of possible postponement and expressed gratitude for the work done.

**Mr. Marney** recalled a recent Council discussion about squatters. He asked whether there was a State law addressing such or whether the City needed to enact something to protect property owners. He suggested that posting "No Trespassing" signs seems to be an invitation to squatters.

**Ms. Sprinkle** acknowledged the need for a new staff member to have the chance to review the program but reminded the Council that November is a time of heavy budget work. She stated that she appreciates the delay but would not like to see it go beyond August or September.

**Mr. Ringstad**, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to POSTPONE Ordinance No. 6283 to the October 14, 2024 Regular Council Meeting.

**Mr. Cleworth** indicated that he believes it should be sooner than that, suggesting the second meeting in August may be more prudent.

**Ms. Rogers** discussed the benefit of having time to review the issues in upcoming work sessions.

**Ms. Sprinkle** asked for details on the suggested meeting dates and plans for the ordinance after postponement. Clerk Snider clarified that the second meeting in August would be August 26. She explained that postponed items are typically included on all work session agendas in the interim.

**Mr. Ringstad**, with concurrence of the second, withdrew the motion to postpone.

**Mr. Cleworth**, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to POSTPONE Ordinance No. 6283 to the August 26, 2024 Regular Council Meeting.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO POSTPONE ORDINANCE NO. 6283 TO THE AUGUST 26, 2024 REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS:	Cleworth, Sprinkle, Tidwell, Marney, Ringstad, Rogers
NAYS:	None

**Mayor Pruhs** declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6283 POSTPONED.

- d) Ordinance No. 6284 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code by Enacting Section 10-208 to Prevent and Address Blight. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs and Council Members Sprinkle and Ringstad.

ADVANCED on the CONSENT AGENDA.

- e) Ordinance No. 6285 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Section 74-36 Economic Development Property Tax Exemption or Deferral and Enacting Section 74-37 Tax Incentive for Property Development, Redevelopment, or Renovation. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs and Council Members Sprinkle and Ringstad.

**Mr. Sprinkle**, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to ADVANCE Ordinance No. 6285.

**Mr. Marney** thanked the sponsors for introducing the ordinance. He discussed how the Borough had attempted something similar in the past. He shared that he recently spoke with former Borough Assemblymember Aaron Lojewski and learned that the program has become defunct but only after putting a big burden on Borough staff. He stated that the bar was also too low for the bottom end. M. Sanders explained that the previous amount had been much higher, but he thought that the consensus at the last work session was to lower the threshold. **Mayor Pruhs** acknowledged that more work could be done on the ordinance and that a sunset date should be included.

**Mr. Ringstad** shared that he had also spoken to individuals familiar with the Borough's attempt with a similar program. He agreed that it had been complicated for everyone involved and urged caution that the Council does not make it more trouble than it is worth. He expressed confidence that the CFO would have the necessary structure in place. He discussed the numerous buildings around town that are in significant need of upgrades to prevent further deterioration. He affirmed the need for incentives to be in place to encourage owners to make improvements that will benefit the overall community for years to come.

**Mr. Cleworth** noted that the program is for a maximum of five years. He asked if a granted exemption would be transferable to a new owner upon sale. M. Sanders indicated that he does not believe that is included in the ordinance. **Mr. Cleworth** recalled that the City Council considered a similar incentive program in the past, which was ultimately not adopted. He agreed that he would like more info about how successful, or not, the Borough's attempt was. He explained that the City's mill rate is so low that it is unlikely the incentive would make or break any potential deals for contractors. He added that it would likely create an accounting headache for the City. He stated that he gets defensive and concerned anytime the Council considers taking away revenue sources or rapidly increasing fees. He expressed a desire to learn how city property owners utilized the Borough's exemption.

**Ms. Sprinkle** shared that she believes only one property owner used the Borough's exemption and concurred that she had heard the paperwork was confusing. She stated that the idea is meant to be a carrot and while they need some more information on the numbers, it would be up to the City to promote it. She clarified that the City would still be getting the standard tax base, just not the additional amount from an increase in property value during renovation or development.

**Mr. Cleworth** pointed out that the properties would be excluded from certain computations that determine the tax cap, that it would not add to the tax base, and that the City would be shooting itself in the foot for years to come. M. Sanders acknowledged that the way the Borough's program was set up did have the detrimental components that had just been addressed. He shared that he and CFO Bell came up with a process that would ensure the City's tax base would not be impacted and the property owner would be reimbursed for any increase from the Borough's assessment. He affirmed that ordinance would be fairly simple to track and implement.

**Mr. Ringstad** reported that when he reviewed the Borough's recent plan, he noted that the number of buildings making up the City's tax base has dropped 30%. He discussed the situation with older buildings and how that number will continue to drop. He stated that the City may give up a little at the beginning, but if more properties become more viable, the City would see increases over the next 25 years.

**Ms. Sprinkle** addressed increasing instances of buildings being purchased and razed instead of redeveloped, with nothing else being built in their place. She expressed concern that this trend would continue to reduce the City's tax base as Mr. Ringstad had identified.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADVANCE ORDINANCE NO. 6285 AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

**Mayor Pruhs** declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6285 ADVANCED.

#### **WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TO THE CITY COUNCIL**

- a) Clay Street Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes of May 1, 2024

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- b) Memorandum Authorizing Fire Department Position Change

**Ms. Sprinkle**, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to AUTHORIZE the Fire Department Position Change.

**Ms. Tidwell** spoke against the change, noting that the additional Captain position that would be eliminated had only recently been created as a way to combat overtime, which the City still struggles with. She acknowledged the need for an Assistant Chief but expressed concern with eliminating any positions at FFD while dealing with the overtime crisis.

Chief Cocco shared that he was hired on the same day that the new Captain position was created in 2022. He explained that the position was placed under the administrative category under the CBA which meant it could not fill fire suppression positions to count towards minimum staffing, which actually increased overtime. He stated that the City needs to take the role out of that equation



as it was not being used in the way it could be. He affirmed that the position change would create an overtime-reducing capability that does not currently exist.

**Ms. Tidwell** asked if this would create a new hole in staffing. Chief Cocco indicated that the position is currently vacant, as the individual who had occupied it chose to return to a fire suppression role. **Ms. Tidwell** clarified that her concern is that the vacancy of the new position would pull someone out of the existing fire suppression staff. Chief Cocco reiterated that the parameters of the CBA meant that the current position was constrained to an administrative role with a 40-hour work week and anything beyond, such as filling in for absences on the suppression team, would be paid as overtime. He added that with the position change, the individual could be used to fill in for absences without overtime pay.

HR Director Jake Merritt referenced page 150 of the 2024 budget book and gave further explanation on the current role having been established specifically for training purposes. He stated that they do not expect that to be lost as far as the expected expertise and responsibilities for whoever would be hired for the position. He confirmed that the change would create an overtime-reducing capability without losing important aspects of FFD leadership.

M. Sanders gave additional background information on the position as it currently functions. He stated that the role was created prior to Ms. Tidwell joining the Council and he believes she is referring to another position. **Ms. Sprinkle** added that she believes Ms. Tidwell is thinking of a Battalion Chief position that had been added during her time on the Council.

**Mr. Cleworth**, with further clarification from Chief Cocco, discussed how the role would impact staffing minimums and overtime. M. Sanders summarized the situation by noting that:

- When the position was created in 2022, one of the three FFD shifts was short one person.
- In 2023, the Council added the additional Battalion Chief so all three shifts would be equal.
- The person in the administrative Captain role moved back to fire suppression.
- They are now changing the vacant Captain position to an Assistant Chief position.
- There is no change in total jobs but a positive shift in overtime-reduction capabilities.

**Mr. Cleworth** noted that the new position would be under a different union agreement than it had been. He asked if the same individual who had moved out of the Captain position would be taking the new role. Chief Cocco indicated that they would go through the proper hiring process so anyone qualified, locally or otherwise, would be welcome to apply.

**Ms. Tidwell** asked for confirmation that the change included a shift in union membership. J. Merritt confirmed that after review of the training program, management concluded that the current role did not have some of the necessary authority to do what that position realistically should be able to do. He stated that after discussion, it was determined that the appropriate rank was Assistant Chief, which is under the IBEW bargaining unit rather than the Fairbanks Firefighters Union (FFU). **Ms. Tidwell** asked if the FFU has to release the position, has been involved with the discussion, and are okay with the change. M. Sanders indicated that the FFU is not actually losing a position, noting that the training Captain position created in 2022 was never a permanent position. He stated that he still anticipates a grievance on the matter.



Attorney Chard clarified that the position being removed does not exist within the IAFF/FFU CBA. He added that the only reference within the agreement appears to consider this designation as an assignment, not a position. He stated that it can be viewed not as a loss of an FFU member but the addition of an IBEW member.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE FIRE DEPARTMENT POSITION CHANGE AS FOLLOWS:

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

c) Memorandum Authorizing Building Department Position Change

AUTHORIZED on the CONSENT AGENDA

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS AND COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS**

**Mr. Cleworth** stated that of the three ordinances on the agenda, the one not discussed, Ordinance No. 6284, is the meat of the whole plan. He indicated that he is glad to see it included, as it gives the City the tools to deal with problem properties. He reiterated wanting more information about how the Borough's property exemption program worked and added that he does not believe the tax incentive ordinance will result in much by way of property improvements.

**Ms. Rogers** expressed gratitude for the productive meeting and thorough discussions. She acknowledged Mr. Cleworth's prediction that the exemption approach may not result in much but stated that it is important to show that the City is trying to do something to improve the community. She indicated that at the very least it conveys understanding and concern and that others may join the effort and take advantage of the opportunity.

**Ms. Sprinkle** shared that she is still working with M. Sanders to create other incentives to promote property improvements and thanked the Council for supporting the efforts to work towards a safer, cleaner City. She indicated that she had no committee reports.

**Ms. Tidwell** stated that she is also excited about the possibility of incentives for property owners and hopes the Council continues to come up with new, creative ideas.

**Mr. Marney** indicated that he is glad to be part of the Council and discussed its role to lead rather than follow. He noted the success of lateral-hire incentives at the Fairbanks Police Department (FPD) and requested a future update on progress towards the goal of having 37 police officers.

**Mr. Ringstad** echoed Mr. Marney's comments on leading versus following.

**Ms. Sprinkle** shared that she will be traveling soon and will attend the July 8 meeting remotely.

### **CITY CLERK'S REPORT**

Clerk Snider indicated that she had no report.

## **CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT**

Attorney Chard indicated that he had no report.

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

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

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

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

a) IAFF/FFU Labor Negotiations – Guidance from Council (*entered at 9:20 p.m.*)

**Mr. Cleworth** brought the City Council out of the Executive Session, noting that the City Council met in Executive Session to discuss IAFF/FFU Labor Negotiations. He affirmed that no action was taken.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

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

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

**Mayor Pruhs** declared the meeting adjourned at 10:28 p.m.



DAVID PRUHS, MAYOR

ATTEST:



D. DANYELLE SNIDER, MMC, CITY CLERK

Transcribed by: CC