



FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, APRIL 14, 2025
FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
800 CUSHMAN STREET, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

The City Council convened at 6:30 p.m. on the above date to conduct a Regular Meeting of the Fairbanks City Council via Zoom webinar and in the City Council Chambers located at 800 Cushman Street, Fairbanks, Alaska, with Mayor David Pruhs presiding and the following Councilmembers in attendance:

Councilmembers Present: Jerry Cleworth, Seat A
 Valerie Therrien, Seat B
 Sue Sprinkle, Seat C
 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
 Ron Dupee, Police Chief
 Richard Sweet, Deputy Police Chief
 Nathan Werner, Police Captain
 Andrew Coccaro, Fire Chief
 Teal Soden, Public Information Officer
 Kristi Merideth, FECC Manager
 Margarita Bell, Chief Financial Officer
 Jennifer Payan, Accounting Specialist (remotely)
 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)

Deputy Police Chief Richard Sweet introduced three new lateral-transfer officers and gave a brief background on their experience prior to joining the Fairbanks Police Department (FPD). He administered the oath of office to Officers Robert Preston, Marshaun Hearn, and Greg Stratman.

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.]

Mayor Pruhs called for comments and hearing none, declared Citizens' Comments closed.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA

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

Mr. Marney pulled item 12(a), Resolution No. 5168, from the consent agenda.

Mayor Pruhs pulled item 12(b), Resolution No. 5169, 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 March 31, 2025

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

SPECIAL ORDERS

a) Update from Green Life Supply Cultivation Facility (license no. 10958) regarding the condition placed on the license renewal by the City Council on March 10.

Mayor Pruhs invited Brandon Emmett, a paid consultant for Green Life Supply who had represented the company at the Regular Meeting of March 10, to provide an update. He noted that B. Emmett had been involved in the Alaska marijuana industry since its inception, serving in many leadership, oversight, and advisory roles. B. Emmett discussed the challenges they have encountered as they work to resolve the issue of odor complaints and filtration deficiencies at the cultivation facility. He shared that Ms. Tidwell participated in a walkthrough and that they were surprised to find numerous ventilation components had been stolen. He stated they also found that several fans had been turned backwards thus self-pressurizing the building and forcing unfiltered air to flow out through any available space. B. Emmett admitted that no one knows how or when the problems occurred but that a mitigation plan had been drafted and was ready to implement. He shared that they would plug holes in the ventilation system, turn fans in the correct direction, and install new filters. He noted that some areas would be shut down for the foreseeable future as they would not be able to bring those spaces up to acceptable standards without significant investment.

Mayor Pruhs asked if Ms. Tidwell was comfortable with the direction the business is taking to correct the issues. **Ms. Tidwell** indicated that she was and stated that it was beneficial to see how large of a project was being undertaken to resolve the problems. She noted that it is easy to oversimplify the concerns by just saying they need to replace some filters. She affirmed that the mitigation plan and their commitment to correct deficiencies is impressive and that she has confidence in their efforts.

Mayor Pruhs asked whether formal action was necessary to confirm that the condition placed on the license renewal at the March meeting had been satisfied. Clerk Snider indicated that she would like to convey an official update to the Alcohol & Marijuana Control Office (AMCO) soon.

Ms. Sprinkle asked for clarification on B. Emmett's role, the history of the business, and how the current situation came to be. B. Emmett clarified that he is a paid consultant who was brought on to help shepherd the company through a transitional period after the primary shareholder in the business passed away unexpectedly. He discussed the challenges the remaining owners and acting management had faced with the sudden changes and spoke about the actions they have taken to bring the business back from the brink of failure. He confirmed that the two remaining owners will now each become 50% owners until or unless the license goes through an official transfer.

Mayor Pruhs noted that it was responsible of the owners to bring B. Emmett on board. B. Emmett stated that he is confident the problems can be resolved in the very near future, although not likely by the 45-day deadline the Council set.

Ms. Tidwell, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to CONFIRM that the condition placed on the renewal application at the March 10, 2025 meeting for License No. 10958 had been met (thus removing the condition).

Ms. Therrien asked if it would be appropriate to extend the deadline by another 30 days. Clerk Snider shared that AMCO would be holding its next board meeting within a few days and that this license was on that agenda. She explained they are anticipating an update from the City. She confirmed that the Council may extend the deadline. **Ms. Therrien** asked if B. Emmett believed he could finish within a 30-day extension period. B. Emmett stated that he believes they could.

Mr. Ringstad stated that sufficient effort had been made for the Council to consider the condition honored.

Mr. Cleworth asked if the business had sufficient funds to complete the project. B. Emmett asserted that they do and that his initial apprehension as to whether they could pull it off has evolved into confidence that they can and will. **Mr. Cleworth** asked if they were required to obtain a permit for the work they are doing. B. Emmett explained that were not, as the work did not impact health or safety nor include electrical or structural modifications. **Mr. Cleworth** asked if the retail component of the business was healthy. B. Emmett noted that the retail operation is under a separate license but that it is healthy.

Mr. Marney asked about the timing and process of transferring ownership of the license and suggested that should be a priority. B. Emmett explained that the owner's unexpected death, along

with the stringent requirements from the State, had created a unique situation. He affirmed that the State is working closely with the business to ensure all appropriate steps are taken.

Ms. Sprinkle noted that the owner passed away over a year ago. She asked if there was a way the Council could verify that things are operating well and that the problems were corrected. B. Emmett extended the invitation for a tour of the facility to any Councilmembers that would like a behind-the-scenes view of the project.

Ms. Tidwell stated that she would prefer to move forward rather than extend the deadline.

Mr. Cleworth asked if the City is able to file a protest on alcohol or marijuana licenses at any time if a problem arose with a business, even if it was not during the license renewal period. City Attorney Chard confirmed that the City, as well as any citizen, can file complaints with AMCO at any time during the year. **Mr. Cleworth** stated that he does not have a problem with the motion on the floor given that the Council maintains that trump card at all times. B. Emmett acknowledged that he and the owners would strive to maintain positive reputations.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO CONFIRM THAT THE CONDITION PLACED ON THE RENEWAL APPLICATION AT THE MARCH 10, 2025 MEETING FOR LICENSE NO. 10958 HAD BEEN MET (THUS REMOVING THE CONDITION) AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

MAYOR'S COMMENTS AND REPORT

Mayor Pruhs asked Fairbanks Emergency Communications Center (FECC) Manager Kristi Merideth to provide a report on dispatch operations.

K. Merideth reported that FECC is almost fully staffed, with 19.5 positions currently filled and a handful of new hires in various stages of onboarding. She stated that they have had to be creative with scheduling to ensure trainers are present whenever necessary. She shared that it was National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week and that some employees were attending out-of-state trainings. She added that the FECC is about to go live with new cloud-based software which would allow for better training opportunities.

Mr. Marney asked how the department is doing with overtime. K. Merideth indicated that with the staffing increases, overtime has also improved. She noted that the FECC's overtime is covered by salary savings from unfilled positions, so it has had no net effect on the budget. **Mayor Pruhs** asked Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Bell to prepare a statement for the Council showing wages and overtime of all departments for the first quarter of 2025. **Mr. Marney** congratulated K. Merideth on the success with filling vacancies within the FECC. K. Merideth expressed appreciation for Human Resources (HR) Director Merritt's hard work.

Mayor Pruhs asked Fire Chief Coccoaro to provide a report on staffing at the Fairbanks Fire Department (FFD).

Chief Coccoaro recounted that the 2025 budget had approved nine new firefighter positions and that they are on their way to having those positions filled. He reported that seven offers had been extended but that they are holding off on the remaining positions in hopes to recruit candidates with both firefighter and paramedic experience. He stated that will put FFD at a total of 59 personnel. Chief Coccoaro shared that the new Community Paramedic had been doing well and has more patients than expected. He shared that the new Deputy Fire Marshal transferred to FFD with over 30 years of experience, including several specialties. He expressed appreciation for the efforts of HR in getting positions filled. Chief Coccoaro reported that FFD had over 7,600 calls in 2024 and thanked the Council for its support in funding FFD personnel and equipment.

Ms. Sprinkle asked for details on the Community Paramedic's schedule. Chief Coccoaro replied that she works four 10-hour days with no overtime, in keeping with the budget. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked how the City gets clients for the program. Chief Coccoaro explained that they operate on an open referral process through FECC and community partners such as the Mobile Crisis program, the hospital, Alaskan Native organizations, and from citizens who reach out. He shared that his goal is to not turn anyone away and to put people on a path to get help even if the Community Paramedic program is not the solution to their specific problem.

Mayor Pruhs shared that Public Works Director Jeremiah Cotter sent a report on staffing which stated that all but one mechanic position in his department would be filled within the week. He highlighted the concerted efforts of HR and various department heads in working to fill vacancies.

Mayor Pruhs discussed the recent protests near City Hall and declared that the City protects all rights of assembly and the freedom of speech. He shared that he attended two recent events and endeavored to keep things calm by serving hot dogs and affirming that the City had no issues with the expression of peoples' views. He stated he was asked to address the crowd at the second protest, and he encouraged all those present to be safe and respectful. He discussed considerations for future protests to provide traffic calming solutions and highlighted the importance public safety. **Mayor Pruhs** shared information about individuals found to be living inside an abandoned building on Cushman Street, which is owned by the Alaska Department of Transportation. He stated that, with the State's permission, the City gave notice to vacate the building, and Housing Coordinator Butler provided information on available services. He commended City staff for helping out in the community in areas that are not necessarily the City's responsibility.

COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

All Councilmembers indicated that they had no comments.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a) Ordinance No. 6312 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Sec. 14-433 Rotation Tow List Eligibility Requirements and Amending the City's Tow Rotation List

Schedule of Fees and Charges for Services. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

Mr. Ringstad, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6312.

Mayor Pruhs called for Public Testimony.

Chelsey Bratcher and William Reams, Co-owners of Tug N' Grin Towing and Recovery – C. Bratcher stated that they heard the City had received complaints about the distance from the city to their location and are considered to be on the “brink of annoyance.” She shared that when they first applied to be on the City’s tow rotation list, they were told that their location in Moose Creek would not be a problem as long as they could respond to calls in a timely manner. She reported that they can be at any location in the city within 23 minutes and that they have a partnership with another local towing company off Van Horn Road if customers prefer that their vehicle be taken to another lot. C. Bratcher stated that most of the vehicles taken to their location are totaled or otherwise undriveable and that their lot is primarily a staging area for insurance companies trying to determine next steps. She shared that they have offered delivery to those needing to get personal belongings out of their vehicles. She acknowledged that their location is remote for Fairbanks-based customers but asserted that multiple avenues for success exist. She added that they go out of their way to provide free services to those in difficult situations after an accident. W. Reams declared that the proposed requirement that a company’s vehicle storage location be within 10 miles of City Hall is understandable but requested additional time to secure another lot close to or within city limits. He shared that, with a realtor’s assistance, they are looking for another property.

Mayor Pruhs asked if there were any complaints on file regarding the Tug N’ Grin business. Chief of Staff Sanders indicated that the only complaints he is aware of pertained to the distance to their storage lot but that communications with the business owners had been positive.

Mr. Ringstad asked C. Bratcher and W. Reams how much of their business is within the core Fairbanks area compared to North Pole. W. Reams shared that they have a lot of business within Fairbanks. He explained that the City of North Pole has a contract with Interior Towing and is currently unwilling to use any other companies. **Mr. Ringstad** asked if the proposed requirement for a storage facility closer to town puts a burden on their business or if it aligns with any existing plans for expansion. W. Reams stated that there is some burden, given the need for a person to provide access at another facility. He shared that he, C. Bratcher, or Robert Smith, the owner of Badger Towing [who joined them at the Public Testimony dais], would have to meet the customer in Fairbanks. He added that they had only been in business for 15 months but have a goal to eventually maintain some equipment in town; he added that purchasing property would take time. R. Smith noted that he had not heard of any complaints about the location of another company, located in Salcha, who has a lot in the city. He shared that his company answers calls from North Pole to Nenana and that he has only had positive experiences with the owners of Tug N’ Grin.

Ms. Sprinkle acknowledged the difficulties with the business location and expressed appreciation for the owners’ testimony. She asked if they also work with the Alaska State Troopers (AST) and, if so, whether the AST has similar concerns. C. Bratcher stated that they do work with the AST but that many of those calls are closer to their location. She reiterated their company’s commitment

to helping people during the difficult experience of having a vehicle towed. She shared that the business slows greatly in the summer season, and losing revenue from City tows would hurt.

Ms. Tidwell asked if a per-mile charge is assessed when a vehicle is picked up in Fairbanks. C. Bratcher confirmed that they only charge what is allowed in the City's Tow Rotation List Schedule of Fees. She indicated that the charge is assessed per mile from the location of the accident to their storage lot in Moose Creek, which is typically about 21 miles.

Mr. Marney asked when they felt a new lot within a 10-mile distance of City Hall would be operational. W. Reams indicated that they intend to have things finalized before next winter. He shared that the biggest challenge is finding a contained property that is not an easy target for break-ins, given the nature of their business. C. Bratcher discussed fencing plus other specifications that are required and added that their realtor had only found one property so far, which costs \$35,000.

Ms. Therrien asked if they had any feedback on the increase of fees proposed by the ordinance. C. Bratcher expressed support for the proposed increases.

Ms. Cleworth asked for a breakdown of what they would normally charge for a callout not initiated by the City. C. Bratcher provided a summary of fees associated with a typical tow, noting that daily storage fees can vary depending on the state of the vehicle and any cleanup required. She added that they do not have any fees for access outside of regular hours as their impound yard is next to their residence. **Mr. Cleworth** asked how difficult it would be for him to get his vehicle out if it was taken to their location. W. Reams indicated that while they prefer advanced notice, they avail themselves 24 hours a day for individuals needing access.

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

Mayor Pruhs addressed the proposed requirement for companies to have a storage facility within 10 miles of City Hall and suggested the Council discuss leaving it as-is, removing it entirely, or amending it in a manner that would be acceptable to the Council, such as implementing an effective date later in the year. He shared that he had previously removed towing companies from the City's tow rotation list for business practices that were deemed predatory and stated he would not want to see a company who had otherwise operated in good faith be knocked off the list due to a difficult, albeit understandable, new requirement.

Mr. Ringstad, seconded by **Ms. Therrien**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6312 by striking Section 14-433(a)(4).

Ms. Sprinkle stated that she was not necessarily against the motion but noted that the section had been added due to complaints about the driving distance for impound lots outside the city. She asked if more details could be provided on the complaints. M. Sanders shared that police officers heard most of the complaints, which were forwarded to the administration and added that it would be appropriate to implement the requirement. He noted that convenience, time, and cost for should be considered.

Mr. Cleworth recalled that the towing section of the Fairbanks General Code (FGC) and the associated fees had been reviewed in length about ten years prior. He discussed the issues at that time, including infighting between competitors and difficulties for citizens in getting access to their vehicles. He agreed that if someone was in an accident and later learned their vehicle had been taken 21 miles away, they would likely and understandably be upset. He suggested that rather than removing the section, the Council add a later effective date to allow any companies that would be immediately noncompliant to have time to implement other options. He reported that he has also heard complaints about the mileage fees from individuals who did not have a preferred towing company and agreed to just accept towing service from a company from the City's rotation list.

Ms. Tidwell indicated that she was also conflicted. **M. Sanders** explained that most complaints go to FPD or FECC first, but individuals who have felt they were overcharged will typically make their way to the Mayor's Office. **Ms. Tidwell** asked if they could hear directly from Police Chief Dupee about what officers are reporting. Chief Dupee confirmed that the complaints FPD receives are typically about bills that have fees on top of what is approved by the FGC. He reported seeing towing bills of up to seven or eight thousand dollars.

Ms. Therrien suggested that an effective date of October 2025 may not be feasible. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked if the Council could set a limit on the total mileage that could be charged. Attorney Chard advised that the Council focus on the pending motion which was to strike Section 14-433(a)(4).

Mr. Ringstad concurred that the Council should instead consider a later implementation date.

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

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6312 by adding "available by October 31, 2026" to the end of Sec. 14-433(a)(4).

Mr. Cleworth asserted that October 2026 was an unnecessarily long delay that he did not support.

Ms. Tidwell, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to AMEND the amendment on the floor by changing "2026" to "2025."

Ms. Tidwell discussed the reasonability of a 6-month timeframe versus 18 months.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if they were making a change for just a single entity. **Mayor Pruhs** confirmed that the amendment would apply to all businesses subject to the ordinance.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND THE AMENDMENT TO ORDINANCE NO. 6312 BY CHANGING "2026" TO "2025" AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6312 BY ADDING "AVAILABLE BY OCTOBER 31, 2025" TO THE END OF SEC. 14-433(a)(4) AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

Mr. Cleworth asked if there is any language in the FGC that addresses the office hours for impound yards. Attorney Chard stated that there is language that sets expectations for operating hours but that he would need to research whether that was in the FGC or just the written agreements between the companies and the City. **Mr. Cleworth** explained that he has heard complaints of individuals sometimes being unable to contact towing companies to arrange access to their vehicle, which results in the accumulation of daily storage fees. He discussed the various fee increases within the ordinance and suggested that while some are reasonable, others seem too high. Attorney Chard shared that FGC Sec. 14-435 establishes a minimum of 8 hours per day for companies to be available for individuals to gain access to their vehicle.

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6312, as Amended, by reducing the callout fee from \$300 to \$200.

Ms. Sprinkle acknowledged that when a vehicle is towed, it amounts to a bad day for the owner and that while fees are to be expected, she believes that \$200 is substantial enough.

Ms. Therrien asked how the proposed increase to \$300 had been determined. M. Sanders explained that the fees had not been reviewed in five years and that the increases would be in line with AST charges.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6312, AS AMENDED, BY REDUCING THE CALLOUT FEE FROM \$300 TO \$200 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Cleworth, Sprinkle, Therrien

NAYS: Marney, Ringstad, Tidwell, Pruhs

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION FAILED.

Mr. Cleworth addressed the security fee proposed increased from \$100 to \$150 and asked what the fee is for. Clerk Snider shared language from FGC Sec. 14-437 regarding the security requirements that towing companies must provide to secure vehicles at their facility; she added that they are permitted to charge a fee for that service.

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6312, as Amended, by keeping the security fee at \$100.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6312, AS AMENDED, BY KEEPING THE SECURITY FEE AT \$100 AS FOLLOWS:

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

Ms. Therrien asked if there is any leeway for individuals whose vehicle is towed on a Friday and who are then charged storage fees over the weekend when the tow company is not available for access. Attorney Chard indicated that he would look into it and share what he finds.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6312, AS AMENDED, AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Marney, Ringstad, Cleworth, Sprinkle, Therrien, Tidwell
NAYS: None
Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6312, as Amended, ADOPTED.

Mr. Marney, Mr. Ringstad, Ms. Sprinkle, Ms. Therrien, and Ms. Tidwell each asked to be added as sponsors for Ordinance No. 6312, as Amended.

NEW BUSINESS

- a) Resolution No. 5168 – A Resolution Amending the City Schedule of Fees and Charges for Services by Adjusting Fire Department Fees and Emergency Services Fees. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

Ms. Therrien, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to APPROVE Resolution No. 5168.

Mr. Marney recounted his desire, as expressed in the last Work Session, to keep the existing \$100 resident discount that was being proposed for elimination, noting that the onus could be on the citizen to provide proof of discount eligibility within a reasonable timeframe. He acknowledged an email sent by Attorney Chard earlier in the day advising against the discount. Attorney Chard acknowledged the good intention of the discount but explained that the definition of a resident was not clearly defined in the City's Charter or Code except for purposes of representation on City boards and commission, elections, voting, and business licensing. He shared that the courts have ruled firmly against discrimination between residents and non-residents for the purposes of providing benefits. He affirmed his advice to discontinue the discount.

Ms. Sprinkle expressed concern that the City would be looking to make money by charging for saving a life. Fire Chief Andrew Cocco explained that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) consider Fairbanks to be either "rural" or "super rural," depending on the zip code, and the rates are recommended for the types of services listed. He affirmed that the fees are a huge revenue stream for the City and that emergency medical services (EMS) are meant to involve fees.

Mr. Cleworth stated that the resident discount has been in place for as long as he could remember. He asked if there has ever been a challenge to it. Attorney Chard indicated that he is not aware of any past issues but that his review of the Alaska Constitution and the FGC on the matter compels

him to advise that the discount be discontinued. **Mr. Cleworth** expressed a desire to keep the discount in place, noting that City residents often assume, even if naively, that certain services are provided at no cost because they pay property taxes. He asserted that the discount is not much and suggested that voter rolls could be used for verification of residency. Attorney Chard explained that in order for the City to justify a discount of this nature, it must show that a legitimate interest is being advanced by the policy. He discussed the difficulties of balancing that requirement with the scope of the FFD's overall mission, responsibilities, and service area. **Mr. Cleworth** indicated that he would still like to find a way to keep the discount in place and that he believes citizens of Fairbanks should get a small break considering how much they already pay in taxes.

Ms. Sprinkle shared about an incident where an ambulance was dispatched to someone near her, within city limits, but the ambulance was from another agency in the Borough. She asked if the discount would apply in that scenario or in a situation where a City resident receives ambulance services outside of city limits. Chief Cocco explained that the Borough has its own schedule of fees which does not include a discount for city residents.

Ms. Therrien stated that if the City continues to offer the resident discount, the individual should be required to provide eligibility verification within 30 days. She suggested that many individuals receiving the service would likely qualify for Medicare/Medicaid and that the City often only receives a couple hundred dollars in payment, and the City should not give away another \$100.

Mr. Ringstad discussed living with residency-based laws for decades and how the courts have ultimately come to not support them. He stated that research had found 52 different definitions of residency across Alaska Statutes. He concurred with the desire to give benefits to residents but argued that the courts have consistently ruled against the concept when it is challenged, opting to use a very broad definition of residency. He also spoke against the idea of tying the discount to voter registration and suggested the Council find better ways to give Fairbanks citizens a break.

Mr. Cleworth asked if a rebate system would be feasible instead of a discount. Attorney Chard concurred with Mr. Ringstad's comments, noting that the broad definition of the courts would ultimately result in almost everyone using ambulance services meeting the definition of a resident. He stated that despite the good intent, he has not seen any recent case to support the concept.

Mr. Marney asked if the discount was used frequently. Chief Cocco indicated that in his experience, discounts of any type are rare anywhere else in the country and that Fairbanks is the only place he had ever seen that had a resident discount. He agreed with Ms. Therrien's analysis that many individuals served are Medicare/Medicaid recipients and that the amount FFD receives in payment barely covers the expense of the ambulance run. He expressed willingness to work with Councilmembers on other creative opportunities to better serve the community.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION NO. 5168 AS FOLLOWS:

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

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Resolution No. 5168 APPROVED.

- b) Resolution No. 5169 – A Resolution Supporting the Development and Completion of a Natural Gas Pipeline from the North Slope, Including a Fairbanks Connector, to Provide Economic, Environmental, and Energy Benefits to Fairbanks and the Interior Region. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs and Councilmembers Therrien, Ringstad, and Tidwell.

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to APPROVE Resolution No. 5169.

Mr. Marney, **Mr. Cleworth**, and **Ms. Sprinkle** each asked to be added as sponsors.

Mayor Pruhs expressed appreciation for the effort to secure a natural gas pipeline connection that would benefit Fairbanks. He suggested that this is the best chance Fairbanks has ever had in seeing the project come to fruition and that while there is a chance it may never happen, the Council should do all it can to advocate for it.

Ms. Therrien asked if the City Clerk could send the signed resolution to the City's lobbyist by the following day, as she and Mr. Ringstad would be traveling to Juneau to speak with legislators. **Mayor Pruhs** indicated that would only be possible if there was no intent for any member to request reconsideration. Clerk Snider explained that she typically waits until the Wednesday following a Council meeting to get ordinances and resolutions signed to allow for any requests for reconsideration. She stated she could make an exception given that all Councilmembers were sponsoring the resolution.

Mr. Marney reported that he and Mayor Pruhs attended a public forum with representatives Will Stapp and Scott Kawasaki and that he had provided both with a copy of the proposed resolution.

Mr. Cleworth asked for more information on the location preferences of the connecting gas line. **Mr. Ringstad** explained the geographic considerations that influenced the resolution's drafting.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION NO. 5169 AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Resolution No. 5169 APPROVED.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TO THE CITY COUNCIL

- a) Historic Preservation Commission Meeting Minutes of December 3, 2024

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- a) 2025 Quarter 1 Sole Source Procurement Report

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Ms. Tidwell shared that in addition to visiting Green Life Supply's cultivation facility, she also had the visited the Fire Training Center (FTC) on 30th Avenue. She stated that the renovations being performed are impressive and encouraged others to schedule a visit. She noted that a special meeting of the FNSB Economic Development Commission would be held the following day. **Mayor Pruhs** thanked Ms. Tidwell for visiting the FTC and for sharing about it with the Council.

Mr. Marney asked if the special Economic Development Commission meeting was to discuss the Alaska Regional Development Organization (ARDOR) for Interior Alaska. **Ms. Tidwell** clarified that the purpose of the meeting is to discuss a proposed tax for the Two Rivers community to support fire services in that area.

Mr. Marney asked for a bullet point summary of what Ms. Therrien and Mr. Ringstad were planning to discuss with legislators in Juneau. **Mayor Pruhs** affirmed that the only items Mr. Ringstad and Ms. Therrien were authorized to discuss on behalf of the City Council were the City's 2025 legislative and capital priorities set forth in Resolution No. 5145.

Mr. Ringstad stated that the coming week would be a heavy one for budget work in the legislature and that major deficits were being proposed, making for a difficult road ahead.

Ms. Sprinkle stated that she will attend upcoming meetings of the Chena Riverfront Commission and the Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors. She expressed concern over reported issues with the Moore Street Senior Apartments. **Mayor Pruhs** confirmed that the Council would be discussing that topic in the near future.

Ms. Therrien discussed her attendance as the City Council representative at the recent Borough Assembly meeting and the items she reported to that body. She shared details on the Legislative Committee's recent activity and provided progress updates on several of the City's legislative priorities. She confirmed that the State's capital budget will likely be bare bones, only providing for what is necessary to prevent the loss of any matching federal funding sources.

Mr. Cleworth asked about the original timeline for completion of the Polaris Building demolition. **Mayor Pruhs** reported that the initial deadline was October 31, 2024, which had been extended to October 31, 2025. **Mr. Cleworth** asked if there were any penalties for failure to meet the deadline. **Mayor Pruhs** explained that they discovered the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation had drastically underestimated the amount of internal contamination present within the building, which led to delays in abatement and an increase in the project costs, which the Council had approved in the previous year. He confirmed that funding for other unexpected overages was still available. **Mr. Cleworth** asked if future delays beyond the already-extended deadline would be handled by the administration or if the issue would come before the Council. **Mayor Pruhs** indicated that the initial extension had been granted through his office based on there being no impact on City-provided funds for the

project. **Mr. Cleworth** thanked Mayor Pruhs for the explanation. He requested that the Council receive an update from the City Engineer on certain City-owned properties in the Birch Hill area. He provided a brief history on various lots and how they came to be owned by the City. He indicated that he would like to have a better understanding of what has transpired in the years since then and what the City can or cannot do with the properties. **Mayor Pruhs** gave additional background on the properties and agreed that it would be a worthwhile topic for an upcoming meeting. **Mr. Cleworth** noted that any potential proceeds from the sale of said properties would go into the City's Permanent Fund, which would be very beneficial to the City.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to ENTER into an Executive Session to discuss a Polaris Demolition Easement.

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

Mayor Pruhs called for a brief recess. The Council reconvened in Executive Session at 8:28 p.m.

- a) Polaris Demolition Easement [permissible under State law, including the provision at AS 44.62.310(c)(1)] *(ended at 8:51 p.m.)*

Mr. Cleworth stated that the Council met in an Executive Session to discuss a Polaris Demolition Easement. He affirmed that no formal action had been taken.

ADJOURNMENT

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

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

Mayor Pruhs declared the meeting adjourned at 8:52 p.m.



For

DAVID PRUHS, MAYOR

ATTEST:



For

D. DANYIELLE SNIDER, MMC, CITY CLERK

Transcribed by: CC