



FAIRBANKS DIVERSITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 12, 2025, 5:30 – 7:00 P.M.
HELD VIA [ZOOM WEBINAR](#) AND AT
FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
800 CUSHMAN STREET, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA



The **Fairbanks Diversity Council (FDC)** met on the above date to conduct a Regular Meeting via Zoom Webinar and at the City Council Chambers, 800 Cushman Street, Fairbanks, Alaska. **Chair Juanita Webb** (Seat D) was physically present, and the following members were in attendance:

Members Present (In Person):

Erica Dillard, Seat A
Jennifer Hartford, Seat B
Karen Blackburn, Seat I
Herb Butler, Seat J
Deirdre Hamilton, Seat K
Jake Merritt, HR Director
Lonny Marney, City Council Member

Also Present:

D. Danyielle Snider, City Clerk

Members Present (Zoom):

June Rogers, Seat C
Dorothy Shockley, Seat F

Members Absent:

Vacant, Seat E
Vacant, Seat G
Vacant, Seat H
David Pruhs, Mayor

CALL TO ORDER (Reading of Mission Statement and Land Acknowledgement)

Chair Webb called the meeting to order at 5 p.m. **K. Blackburn** read the land acknowledgement. **H. Butler** read the mission statement.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Webb led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Webb added items to the agenda under New Business: email from former member Marsha Oss; and conversation with new members on expectations.

D. Hamilton, seconded by **K. Blackburn**, moved to approve the agenda, as amended.

Chair Webb called for objection on the motion to APPROVE the agenda, as amended, and seeing none, the agenda was approved.

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

a) Regular Meeting Minutes of July 8, 2025

K. Blackburn, seconded by **E. Dillard**, moved to approve the meeting minutes.

D. Shockley asked for more information in the section where new members introduced themselves. Clerk Snider indicated that the meeting minutes could be revised to add more detail, and they would return to the body at the next meeting for approval. No members objected.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS (Limited to 3 Minutes) – None

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

Chair Webb stated that she had no report.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a) Chair Term Ended; Election of New Vice Chair

Chair Webb congratulated K. Blackburn on becoming the new FDC chair. She requested that members consider nominations for Vice Chair, which will be addressed at the next meeting.

b) Human Library Update – Event Coordinators: Marney, Webb
Noel Wien Library, September 20, 11 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Chair Webb asked L. Marney to share with new members about the FDC's upcoming Human Library. **L. Marney** explained that there will be various people, scheduled at certain times, to share about their life experiences with others. **Chair Webb** stated that it is a safe place to learn about others and encouraged members to contact her if they know of someone who would like to volunteer to be a "book." She added that H. Butler has volunteered to be a book.

J. Rogers stated that the way the Human Library is being described makes it sound like all the stories will be about times of difficulty. She questioned whether there is an option for someone to share a joyful topic. **Chair Webb** replied that she did not intend for it to sound negative. She asked if anyone had a topic or recommendations to share.

J. Hartford stated that her husband has a great story of recovery and indicated that she would speak with him about sharing.

H. Butler suggested an in-house library where each FDC member could offer their own story.

D. Shockley asked if there is already a list of volunteers. **Chair Webb** stated that, so far, H. Butler is interested as well as a gentleman that lives in Fox who is legally blind.

J. Rogers suggested that perhaps former FDC member Jonathan Bagwill may be willing to participate in the library. She stated that he thought it was a really special project.

c) Diversity Activity Book

Chair Webb spoke about her project to create a diversity activity book. She stated that she is personally funding the project, and she has not reported much about it because it was placed on

hold because she had gotten very busy. She stated that while it is not an FDC project, she hopes that the FDC will endorse it when it is finished. She clarified that no City funds are being spent on the project and that the focus is on young children. **H. Butler** shared that he feels that diversity is more of a mature subject and that he has never considered teaching youth about diversity. He stated that it does sound like an opportunity, but he is not sure how it would work. **Chair Webb** explained that the hope is to teach children at a young age to accept people as they are. She shared that some of the pages are finished, but there is no book yet.

D. Shockley asked to see a copy. **Chair Webb** agreed to share it but stated that it is still in draft form.

d) Calendar of Events (informational only)

Chair Webb asked how the Midnight Sun Intertribal Powwow went. **H. Butler** stated that he attended. He shared that there was a drum group attending from out of state that had applied for years to come to Fairbanks for the Powwow. He indicated that there were also two other drum groups—one from Anchorage and one from Fairbanks—that are regulars at the event. He briefly spoke about the princess pageant, in which a lot of people work hard to enter their children to get them chosen as a princess. **H. Butler** shared that the event took place in well-built tents and indicated that the only drawback was that there were not enough food vendors. He stated that overall, it was a well-done event with plenty of speakers. He added that it is not anything like the competition-type or non-traditional type of Powwows in the Lower 48.

Chair Webb asked if anyone attend the World Eskimo-Indian Olympics (WEIO) events. **H. Butler** stated that he did. He spoke in favor of the Carlson Center as the event venue. He shared that he is impressed every year with the number of youth who enter and reach competitive levels—some of whom are not even old enough for college. He stated it is a fun event that he has attended for years, and there does not seem to be any diminishing of the event.

J. Rogers shared that she has been attending WEIO events for many years. She shared that she was a part of an early group that started the Powwow. She commented that there are so many youth involved in both WEIO and the Powwow, which makes the events special. She stated that the events need to be supported by the community.

D. Shockley shared that WEIO came about in the 1960s and started off as a tourist attraction so people could observe the Alaska Native culture. She stated that the event grew from there. She spoke about the various competitions and stated that they are activities Natives would do to perform actual tasks in their villages. She recalled attending as a child when the event was held in a packed-out Patty Center gymnasium with attendees from all over the state and from all walks of life. She stated that, unfortunately, it is not as big as it used to be, but it is fun to watch and learn.

Chair Webb stated that since the FDC meets only once per month, members need to think ahead about events. She listed several upcoming events from the Calendar of Events.

J. Rogers stated that she recently spoke with former FDC member Rosalind Kan who would love to be involved with the FDC but is unable to currently due to other commitments.

NEW BUSINESS

- a) Email from former member Marsha Oss

This item referenced an email Clerk Snider forwarded to FDC members prior to the meeting. The email was an invitation to the local Restorative Reentry Gathering on August 16.

- b) Member Introductions and Expectations

Chair Webb asked each member to speak about what they are seeking as a member of the FDC and what diversity means to them.

J. Merritt introduced himself as the City HR Director. He shared that he believes diversity is an understanding that everyone comes from a different place but everyone has something to offer.

J. Hartford stated that she is the HR Director at Family Centered Services of Alaska. She expressed her desire to be more involved in the Fairbanks community. She stated she moved to Fairbanks in 2021, and it is her forever home. She shared that to her diversity is people from different cultures and backgrounds coming together to accept and celebrate those differences. .

E. Dillard shared that she works at Family Centered Services of Alaska as the Quality Assurance Director. She stated that her husband is half Yup'ik Eskimo, and she worked at a village high school made up of predominately Native Alaskan students. She stated that through that and raising a diverse family she has learned that it is important for everyone to come together and do great things in spite of differences. She stated that it is important to celebrate differences.

K. Blackburn stated that she is the Executive Director for Northern Hope Center. She shared that she is originally from Louisiana but moved to Fairbanks in 2005, then married a pastor's son. She stated that she experienced a culture shock moving to Fairbanks because she was raised in a place that was still segregated. **K. Blackburn** stated that seeing the mixed cultures was new to her, and she was in awe of what Alaska had to offer. She stated she does not want to live anywhere else. She commented that things just kind of flow in the Fairbanks community, and there is no rush for anything. She stated that is how she feels diversity should be: free. She added that it is freeing to be friends with people from all places.

J. Rogers commented that diversity is so many more things than most people describe it as. She stated that she tends to see it in a much broader scope. She spoke about how the elderly are revered in the Alaska Native culture, but senior citizens are often left out in other areas in the community. She commented that the local military are not as connected to the community as they should be. She spoke about how special Fairbanks is—how there is a different sense of population. She added that the dress code is “come as you are.” She stated that is what she believes diversity is. **J. Rogers** stated that Fairbanksans are a widely travelled people and that we have only scratched the surface of what diversity is in the Fairbanks community. She stated that diversity should be specific to the community and be about how people work together and help each other. She commented that some

people have previous hurts that make it difficult for them to move forward and trust others and that it is everyone's responsibility to make comfortable spaces.

D. Shockley shared that she is Upper Koyukon Dena, and her family comes from Yukon River and Tanana River villages. She stated that she grew up in Manley Hot Springs. She listed the many facets of diversity and stated that if everyone celebrated who they are, there may be no need for a diversity council. She mentioned gender and religion as important parts of diversity, and she stated that embracing and celebrating each other is what diversity means to her.

H. Butler shared that his mother was from Nenana, his father was from Allakaket, and he is from a clan from Nenana and Minto. He stated that his wife Nancy is from Huslia and from a much larger clan than him in the Upper Koyukuk River area. He spoke about his written story, which has been on Amazon ebooks for at least 12 years and is titled *Assimilation Trail*. He shared a list of categories that would be a part of a diversity program: ethnicity, gender, LGBTQ, disability, political affiliation, economics, etc. He spoke about how the major oil discovery in the 1970s brought different cultures to Alaska and about how that brought about a major political change that has caused differences. **H. Butler** stated that there is a need for a diversity council, and there is a reason why they such groups exist throughout the nation. He spoke about how successful immigration to the U.S. has resulted in a wide array of religious beliefs. He stated that as far as the FDC is concerned, it is a matter of sitting, observing and becoming more familiar with everyone. He shared that he stopped at the Mayor's table at the fair and asked the representative there to pass on an invitation to the Mayor to attend FDC meetings.

D. Hamilton stated that her father was in the Air Force, so she has lived in ten different states and has been overseas twice. She expressed that she feels that that knowledge of other places makes her more diversified than other people. She shared that her sister has two Black sons, one of her daughters has four Black children, and another daughter has two Mexican children. She stated that her family accepts anyone and everyone, and that is what she feels diversity is. She commented that everyone breathes air and bleeds red. She stated she is serving on the FDC to help.

L. Marney stated that he came to Alaska in 1974 and planned to stay only a couple of years to finish college. He spoke about his work history in Fairbanks, mostly in vehicle retail. He stated that he has dealt with people his whole life, and if everyone was the same it would be a boring world. He commented that he has lived in Fairbanks for nearly 52 years, and the people and the summers is what keeps him in the community.

J. Webb shared that she is the Community Engagement Manager for Explore Fairbanks. She stated that to her, diversity is about communicating and respecting one another even when there are differences. She stated that years ago at FDC meetings, the room was filled with people. She shared that she wants the community to know that the FDC exists and can make a difference.

FDC MEMBERS' COMMENTS

D. Shockley stated that she would like for the FDC to send the land acknowledgement resolution to the City Council once a month for consideration. She explained she was disappointed that the

Council voted it down, but she still feels a need to continue to ask the Council to consider it. She stated that maybe they will recognize the importance of it. She welcomed the new FDC members.

L. Marney asked D. Shockley if she was aware that Councilmember Therrien provides a land acknowledgement at each City Council meeting. **D. Shockley** stated that she was not aware, and that is great. She added, however, that she would still like for the Council to acknowledge it.

H. Butler, referencing the email that was sent out, asked what reentry means. **Chair Webb** stated that reentry is when an incarcerated person is released and reenters society. **H. Butler** stated that he is friends with Leonard Peltier, who was finally released from prison and is now enjoying home confinement thanks to the last acts of President Biden. He explained that L. Peltier is at his reservation in Belcourt, ND and has received hundreds of visitors since his release. He shared that L. Peltier is now in his 80s but has become more accustomed to being a “free” man after nearly 50 years behind bars.

Chair Webb, in response to D. Shockley’s comments, requested that a discussion regarding the land acknowledgement be place on the next agenda. She reminded FDC members to RSVP for meetings by responding to Clerk Snider’s emails.


MEETING DATES

- a) Next Regular Meeting Date, September 9, 2025

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Webb declared the meeting adjourned at 6:36 p.m.


Karen Blackburn, Chair


D. Danyielle Snider, MMC, City Clerk

Transcribed by: DS