Sponsored by: Mayor O'Neall
Date: October 12, 2026

RESOLUTION NO. 5240

A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING LEGISLATIVE CHANGES TO THE ALASKA PUBLIC RECORDS ACT TO MODERNIZE MUNICIPAL PUBLIC RECORDS PROCESSES AND PERMIT REASONABLE COST RECOVERY, AND REQUESTING THE ALASKA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE TO INCLUDE SUCH REFORMS IN ITS LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

WHEREAS, the Alaska Public Records Act seeks to promote transparency in government by requiring municipalities to respond to requests for public information; and

WHEREAS, local governments across Alaska face increasing administrative burdens from high-volume, commercial, blanket, and out-of-state public records requests, which consume limited staff resources and impede essential public services; and

WHEREAS, current statute permits up to five hours of staff time monthly per requestor before fees may be assessed, a structure that commercial data and media firms exploit at the expense of municipalities and the public; and

WHEREAS, Alaska law provides limited clarity regarding allowable fees, redaction time, and cost-recovery mechanisms, resulting in inconsistent statewide practices and financial strain on municipalities; and

WHEREAS, many states and federal guidelines, including the U.S. Office of Management and Budget's Commercial Use Requestor category, recognize that commercial requestors impose distinct burdens and should be subject to differentiated fee structures; and

WHEREAS, modernizing the Alaska Public Records Act to clarify municipal authority to charge reasonable, cost-based fees, better differentiate between individual and commercial requestors, and establish clearer standards for processing requests would strengthen municipal capacity while preserving public access.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF FAIRBANKS as follows:

Section 1. The City supports amendments to the Alaska Public Records Act to:

1. Authorize municipalities to assess reasonable, cost-based fees reflecting the actual personnel time required to search, review, redact, and produce public records, regardless of the total hours involved;
2. Establish a distinct fee category for commercial and repeat requestors, consistent with federal OMB guidelines;

3. Provide clearer statutory procedures for redaction, segregation of exempt and non-exempt information, and communication of timelines; and
4. Reduce the administrative burden on municipalities while maintaining transparency and equitable public access.

Section 2. The City Council requests the Alaska Municipal League to include these reforms in its legislative priorities for the upcoming legislative session.

Section 3. The City Clerk is directed to send this executed resolution to Governor Dunleavy, members of the Interior Delegation, and the Alaska Municipal League.

Section 4. The effective date of this resolution is six days after adoption.

Mindy O'Neall, Mayor

YEAS: PASSED on the CONSENT AGENDA
NAYS: None
ABSENT: Sprinkle
APPROVED: October 12, 2026

ATTEST:

D. Danyielle Snider, MMC, City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Thomas A. Chard II, City Attorney