

RESOLUTION NO. 5145

**A RESOLUTION STATING THE CITY OF FAIRBANKS LEGISLATIVE
AND CAPITAL PRIORITIES FOR 2025**

WHEREAS, the City of Fairbanks appreciates any support and funding from the State of Alaska; and

WHEREAS, the City has identified the following legislative and capital priorities, and the public had an opportunity to hear about these priorities at special work session on November 25, 2024 and to provide comment on the priorities at a regular City Council meeting on December 2, 2024.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL that the 2025 legislative and capital priorities of the City of Fairbanks are as follows:

2025 Legislative Priorities

1. Concern about the high PERS rate of 22% being charged to municipalities.
2. Mitigate municipalities' liability regarding the PFOS/PFOA ground water contamination and fund remediation efforts for PFOS/PFOA ground water contamination.
3. Allow Tier 1, 2, and 3 PERS retirees to continue to collect retirement if they return to work to fill critical shortages under Tier 4.
4. Maintain SART funding to help communities meet testing liabilities.
5. Ensure the University of Alaska in Fairbanks is the priority for university operational and capital funding.
6. Allocate funding to prioritize the development and expansion of a crisis behavioral health system in the State of Alaska.
7. Establish legislation with significant fines/penalties for intentionally exposing first responders and medical personnel to bodily fluids.
8. Update AS 40.25.110 to allow for fees to be applied for any video copying and/or editing required for a public records request.
9. Exempt local governments from vehicle registration fees.
10. Maintain a baseline of \$60 million annually in Community Assistance Program funding.
11. Allow housing activities under the State of Alaska Community Development Block Grant.
12. Adjust legislation around child abandonment laws to allow for "baby boxes."
13. Fund the Emergency Service Patrol in Fairbanks.

2025 Capital Priorities

1. Design and establish an Interior Alaska Regional Emergency Vehicle Operation Course track.

2. Provide funding for ALMR Radios required by State of Alaska system upgrade.
3. Support funding for Moore Street Seniors Inc. to upgrade Moore Street Senior Apartments.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Clerk is directed to send a copy of this resolution to the Office of the Governor and the Interior Alaska Legislative Delegation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution is effective five days after adoption.



David Pruhs, Mayor

AYES: PASSED and APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA
NAYS: None
ABSENT: None
APPROVED: December 2, 2024

ATTEST:

APPROVED AS TO FORM:



D. Danyielle Snider, MMC, City Clerk



Thomas A. Chard II, City Attorney

PROGRAMMATIC/LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

1. Concern about the high PERS rate of 22% being charged to municipalities.

The majority of the 22% we are mandated to pay goes to retire the legacy debt of the original defined benefit retirement plan (PERS). From FY2008 to FY2023, all PERS employers (State and municipalities) have paid an additional \$7.7 billion toward the unfunded liability. Locally, the FNSB and two cities within have paid \$132.2 million for their share of this liability. These payments, unfortunately, will continue for years to come. This is possibly the largest financial fiasco in the State's history. The municipalities had a reasonable expectation that the State would be proper stewards of these funds and learned far too late that this was incorrect. If State leaders truly feel that the new DB program will work, then we request that all municipalities be exempt from paying off any new debt created by this new plan. This would be fair, as the City of Fairbanks has no control over the management of these funds.

2. Mitigate municipalities' liability regarding the PFOS/PFOA ground water contamination and fund remediation efforts for PFOS/PFOA ground water contamination.

The City of Fairbanks requests relief from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) plume characterization requirements related to the Perfluoro octane Sulfonate (PFOS)/Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA) contamination at the Fairbanks Regional Fire Training Center. The contamination at the training center occurred over decades of use by all the regional fire services including city, borough, and state agencies. The City also requests State funding for PFOS/PFOA mitigation efforts. PFOS/PFOA contamination is a world-wide health concern with countless contributing factors to the contamination. The City anticipates changes in PFOS/PFOA regulations will require additional mitigation efforts, to include the decommissioning of private wells, which will cost more than the local community can afford.

3. Allow Tier 1, 2, and 3 PERS retirees to continue to collect retirement if they return to work to fill critical shortages under Tier 4.

With the nationwide labor pool shortages, allowing Tier 1, 2, and 3 PERS retirees to continue to collect retirement if they return to work could help fill critical staffing shortages in positions that fall under Tier 4. Many agencies are having difficulty finding good candidates for jobs, and a simple tweak to the current PERS system could create a huge pool of quality applicants for PERS positions. The basic concept is for the State of Alaska to allow PERS Tier 1, 2, & 3 employees to retire, collect their retirement, and return to the workforce under the Tier 4 system. This would allow them to be paid their retirement while rejoining the workforce and paying into the PERS system again. It would bring qualified and experienced workers back to PERS jobs and allow agencies to build back the workforce.

4. Maintain SART funding to help communities meet testing liabilities.

The City of Fairbanks requests that the SART funding dedicated to Fairbanks be maintained to help offset the current costs of the demands.

5. Ensure the University of Alaska in Fairbanks is the priority for university operational and capital funding.

The City of Fairbanks requests that the University of Alaska in Fairbanks is the priority for university funding.

6. Allocate funding to prioritize the development and expansion of a crisis behavioral health system in the State of Alaska.

The City of Fairbanks requests that the legislature prioritize funding for continued development and expansion of the crisis behavioral health system. Sustaining services of the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and existing Mobile Crisis Teams (MCTs) and supporting the infrastructure needed for more MCTs and Crisis Stabilization Centers across the state will provide for the comprehensive, appropriate, and immediate provision of behavioral health services across Alaska. The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority has supported Fairbanks by funding an MCT and a Crisis Now Coordinator for four years. The state needs to increase funding for life-saving crisis services, which will reduce costly treatment in more restrictive environments. A Crisis Stabilization Center in the Interior would accept drop-offs from law enforcement and other public safety entities, offsetting valuable time for first responders across the region and providing an alternative to costly and traumatic incarcerations and hospitalizations for individuals. It would also reduce the burden on families in the Interior region seeking treatment outside the state or in Anchorage for loved ones. Medication-assisted treatment services would be used at the centers to provide direct and immediate support to individuals suffering from substance use disorders, including fentanyl misuse.

7. Establish legislation with significant fines/penalties for intentionally exposing first responders and medical personnel to bodily fluids.

It has become common for members of the public to intentionally spit on police officers and paramedics. These incidents account for approximately 20% of all the reported employee safety incidents for the City of Fairbanks. The City of Fairbanks requests the State impose significant fines and penalties for individuals who intentionally expose first responders to bodily fluids to deter this type of behavior.

8. Update AS 40.25.110 to allow for fees to be applied for any video copying and/or editing required for a public records request.

One of the most frequent record requests to the City of Fairbanks is for body/vehicle/ interview-room camera footage from the Fairbanks Police Department (FPD). While the FPD appreciates the ability to share these videos, the department must block out any

identifying information that the requestor is not authorized to have. This information can include bystander faces, license plates, identification cards, etc. The video editing required for even a simple traffic stop can be quite time-consuming and expensive. Currently AS 40.25.110 only allows for fees to be collected for personnel costs of requests that exceed five person-hours in a calendar month, and other fees cannot exceed the standard unit cost of duplication. The City of Fairbanks requests that the State amend AS 40.25.110 to allow public agencies to establish a per-hour fee for video record requests.

9. Exempt local governments from vehicle registration fees.

The City of Fairbanks requests a one-time registration for government-owned vehicles and equipment. This requirement will reduce staff time and costs related to maintaining vehicle registrations for the many vehicles in the City's fleet.

10. Maintain an annual baseline of \$60 million in the Community Assistance Program.

The City of Fairbanks is concerned with the reductions in the community assistance program and requests the State restore a baseline of \$60 million annually to the program.

11. Allow housing activities under the State of Alaska Community Development Block Grant.

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) provides annual grants to states, cities, and counties to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment and by expanding economic opportunities, principally for low- and moderate-income persons. While housing activities are eligible under CDBG guidelines, the State of Alaska CDBG program does not allow housing activities and will not award funds for acquisition of property for permanent housing, rehabilitation of permanent housing, conversion of non-residential structures into permanent housing, or activities connected with new housing construction. Removing housing activities eligible under the federal program limits the City's ability to help residents of our community with a crucial need of finding and providing safe and affordable housing for all.

12. Adjust legislation around child abandonment laws to allow for "baby boxes."

The Safe Haven Baby Boxes Program prevents illegal abandonment of newborns by raising awareness, offering a 24-hour hotline for mothers-in-crisis, and offering a last-resort surrender option. The primary purpose of the program is to eliminate infant death by abandonment. The use of baby boxes in the Interior will offer a method for preventing infant death due to abandonment.

13. Fund the Emergency Service Patrol in Fairbanks.

The City of Fairbanks requests \$300,000 for the City's emergency service patrol (ESP). Title 47 (AS 47.37) mandates that persons who are incapacitated by alcohol or drugs must be taken into protective custody by a peace officer or member of an ESP. The City seeks to continue its ESP for city-wide transport of incapacitated persons. The ESP is the most efficient and cost-effective means of meeting the state-imposed mandates under Title 47.

CAPITAL PRIORITIES

1. Design and establish an Interior Alaska Regional Emergency Vehicle Operation Course track.

Operating a police vehicle is a highly demanding and high-risk responsibility for officers, necessitating specialized skills and experience to ensure the safety of all parties involved. Fairbanks, as a significant center for law enforcement training, lacks an adequate facility for vehicle training. Officers have had to use suboptimal locations such as dirt pads, borrowed parking lots, and runways, which do not fulfill training requirements. Establishing a dedicated training area is crucial for enhancing safety and preparedness. Additionally, the facility could serve the fire and public works departments, facilitate community engagement events such as safety days, and provide defensive driving courses. This strategic investment would improve training effectiveness and substantially mitigate safety risks for both officers and the community. The estimated cost is \$2,700,000.

2. Provide funding for ALMR Radios required by State of Alaska system upgrade.

Over the last decade, police and fire radios have been nearing the end of their service life. Alaska Land Mobile Radio (ALMR), the digital radio service required by the State of Alaska, requires upgrades to the infrastructure and devices themselves. Several radios are past the ability to receive these updates and will need to be completely replaced. Some radios are broken and need to be repaired. According to ALMR, multiple police and fire vehicle and portable handheld radios' usability will expire by 2026. The estimated cost to upgrade and purchase new radios is \$400,000.

3. Support funding for Moore Street Seniors Inc. to Upgrade Moore Street Senior Apartments.

In 2022, the Legislature provided \$378,103 to the Moore Street Senior Apartments in Fairbanks for windows, siding, and automatic doors. Due to extraordinary increases in construction costs, the original estimated budget was not enough to complete the necessary upgrades. The automatic door openers were installed with additional funding from Rasmuson Foundation and Kinross. There is a remaining balance of \$351,103 available for windows and siding, however, an additional \$450,000 is needed.