



FAIRBANKS DIVERSITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 12, 2017 – 5:30 PM
FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
800 CUSHMAN STREET, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA



The Fairbanks Diversity Council (FDC) convened at 5:30 p.m. on the above date to conduct a Regular Meeting at the City Council Chambers, 800 Cushman Street, Fairbanks, Alaska, with Vice Chair Walters presiding and with the following members in attendance:

Members Present: Lisa Slayton, Seat B
Juanita Webb, Seat D
Herbert Butler, Seat G
Rosalind Kan, Seat H
Marna Sanford, Seat I
Douglas Toelle, Seat J
Jo Ann Borges, Seat K
Amber Taylor, Seat N
Kelvin Lee, Seat O (telephonic)
June Rogers, Councilmember
Angela Foster-Snow, HR Director

Members Absent: Heidi Shepard, Seat A (excused)
Montean Jackson, Seat C (excused)
Vacant, Seat E
Vacant, Seat F
Rita Davis, Seat L (unexcused)
Mayor Jim Matherly, Chair (excused)

Also Present: D. Danyielle Snider, City Clerk
Eric Jewkes, Police Chief

CALL TO ORDER & READING OF THE FDC MISSION STATEMENT

Vice Chair Walters welcomed everyone to the meeting. He explained that Mayor Matherly is absent because he is attending the Hanukkah Festival of Lights celebration. He asked Ms. Taylor to read aloud the FDC mission statement.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Vice Chair Walters led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Toelle, seconded by Ms. Webb, moved to APPROVE the Agenda.

Vice Chair Walters took a voice vote on the motion to APPROVE the Agenda. The motion PASSED unanimously.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS (Limited to 3 Minutes)

Robert Shields, 145 Marten Drive, Fairbanks – Mr. Shields stated that he was asked by Ms. Borges to attend the meeting. He commended the work of the FDC and stated that he would like to plant two seeds with the FDC: 1) consider working with the Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition to put together a diversity parade at the Earth Day event; and 2) recommend that the City of Fairbanks participate in identifying and making available renewable energy for tax-challenged organizations and underserved community members. He stated that converting to solar energy may cost \$15,000 – \$20,000 per household, but that everyone should be looking at renewable energy in the current climate. He spoke to local support for the project.

Frank Turney, 329 6th Avenue, Fairbanks – Mr. Turney referenced the magazine article he distributed prior to the meeting regarding privacy in public restrooms. He read aloud parts of the article which spoke out against the bathroom mandate. Mr. Turney stated that the mandate invades the privacy of individuals and is harmful in other ways. He expressed his opinion that gender questioning is a mental health issue. Mr. Turney briefly spoke to discrimination in the jury pool. He mentioned that the industrial hemp bill passed the Senate.

Sharon Hunter, 322 Cross Way, North Pole – Ms. Hunter stated that when she heard about the FDC she went online to find out more. She stated that the most recent meeting minutes she found were from June or July and that she was told by City staff that there were no more recent minutes available.

Clerk Snider stated that there is a time lag in posting minutes due to the approval process but that meeting minutes through September are available. She stated that she would make sure the website is updated.

Mr. Butler asked Ms. Hunter what she thought of the site. Ms. Hunter suggested that the Diversity Action Plan (DAP) be linked to the Fairbanks Diversity Council webpage, not just the City's homepage.

Hearing no more requests for comment, Vice Chair Walters declared Citizens' Comments closed.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Vice Chair Walters talked about upcoming holiday events he saw posted on the Explore Fairbanks website; he mentioned the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday weekend and events in January. Mr. Lee stated that No Limits will hold its 4th annual Night of Hope event on December 23 from 6 – 8 p.m. at the JP Jones Center. Ms. Taylor shared that FNA will hold its Christmas party on December 13 from 5 – 8 p.m. at Pioneer Park, and everyone is welcome.

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

a) Regular Meeting Minutes of October 10, 2017

Mr. Toelle, seconded by Ms. Taylor, moved to APPROVE the Regular Meeting Minutes of October 10, 2017.

Vice Chair Walters took a voice vote on the motion to APPROVE the Minutes. The motion PASSED unanimously.

FAIRBANKS POLICE DEPARTMENT & HUMAN RESOURCES REPORTS

Police Chief Eric Jewkes stated that the Fairbanks Police Department (FPD) has been busy. He shared that two officers recently came out of field training and are doing well on their own. He stated that three officers have just returned from the academy, two with military backgrounds and one local young man. He stated that FPD is gearing up to fill a February police academy, and they still have seven officers left to hire. Chief Jewkes stated that Officer Lewis retired at the end of November, and there is a constant ebb and flow in staffing. He expressed hope that 2018 would be quieter than 2017. In response to a question from the Vice Chair regarding

diversity, Chief Jewkes stated that one of the new officers is a female and another is Hispanic. He added that the Dispatch Department is struggling also with seven vacancies.

Members asked the Chief questions about diversity training efforts, translation resources, interactions and involvement with other local law enforcement agencies, and cultural immersion in the community.

Ms. Foster-Snow shared that the City has been working through its 2018 budget, and it was approved by the City Council on December 11. She stated that the City's negotiating team continues to work through labor negotiations with the various unions. She stated that HR has been busy hiring temporary operators at Public Works for snow removal. In regard to the earlier comments about the City's website, she announced that the City is collecting bids for a new website design and there are plans to move to a new website soon.

Vice Chair Walters noted that City Attorney Paul Ewers was present. He requested that a discussion on the powers and duties of the FDC be added under Unfinished Business; no members objected.

DIVERSITY TOPIC OF THE MONTH

Mr. Butler suggested inviting the Borough Mayor to an FDC meeting since the body has a direct impact on both the City and the Borough. Vice Chair Walters stated that for January and February diversity topics, he has noted to invite students from the African-American clubs in the FNSB School District and Mayor Karl Kassel. Ms. Rogers stated that she would like to invite elders "of a certain age and experience" to participate in a future meeting; she commented that elders are an important part of the community. Ms. Borges stated that she would like to extend an invitation to representatives of the NAACP Bennie Colbert and Ruby Sutton.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a) Powers and Duties of the FDC – City Attorney Paul Ewers

City Attorney Ewers stated that the limitations of the FDC's authority may depend on the issue; he referenced his recent, written memo to the City Clerk which was forwarded to the membership. He stated that, in general, the FDC may continue with its public outreach and support for certain projects without governing body approval. He stated that if the FDC would like to take a position on an issue the City Council or Borough Assembly has the authority to act upon, the FDC would have to make a recommendation to the governing body. In response to a question from Vice Chair Walters, Mr. Ewers explained the difference between the FDC's authority to get involved with projects like the "potty project" versus it taking an official position on a bill in the state legislature.

Members provided comments and asked questions of Mr. Ewers related to the FDC's powers and authority. Attorney Ewers clarified that the FDC is an advisory body to the City Council and the Borough Assembly, and he again referenced his memo which quoted FGC Sec. 2-234. He stated that the FDC has the authority to write position papers to advocate for certain things in the community. Members indicated they would like to see more involvement and communication between the FDC and the FNSB.

Mr. Ewers closed by stating that he welcomes future questions from the FDC as issues arise.

NEW BUSINESS

- a) City Ordinance No. 6064 – Changes to Chairperson Position

Vice Chair Walters read aloud the changes in FGC 2-233(a). He asked members to begin considering whether they are interested in serving as a Chair, and he suggested that the item be addressed at the January meeting. He spoke about what is expected of the position.

FDC COMMITTEE REPORTS

Education & Outreach/Media & Communications Committee – **Vice Chair Walters** stated that there were no November or December meetings, and there is nothing to report.

Accessibility Committee – **Mr. Toelle** stated that he was the only member present at the meeting, and he has nothing to report.

Policies & Procedures Committee – **Ms. Sanford** stated that she is proposing to cancel the January 4 meeting and instead do a “trifecta” of meetings starting later in January focused on policy writing. She stated that she is looking at noon meetings on January 18, 25 and February 2, 2018. She asked committee members to respond to the email she sent.

At **Ms. Borges’** request, **Vice Chair Walters** invited Ms. Tanya Coty to come forward to speak since she did not speak under Citizens’ Comments. No members objected.

Tanya Coty, 616 Steele Creek Road, Fairbanks – Ms. Coty introduced herself as the Equal Opportunity and Educational Coordinator for the FNSB School District. She stated that she would be regularly attending FDC meetings instead of Wendy Tisland, the former Executive Director for the District. She stated that she looks forward to working with the FDC but that she would be unable to attend the January 9 meeting. She stated that she has been working with Mr. Walters on some issues. Ms. Coty shared that the District just finished its Affirmative Action Plan, and she will be presenting statistically-significant findings in the Plan to the School Board in January. She spoke about recent changes to the District’s Diversity Committee, and she invited folks to apply to serve by visiting the School District website. She shared that the next Committee meeting will be held on January 18, 2018.

FDC MEMBERS COMMENTS

Mr. Lee apologized for not being physically present. He stated he has no other comments.

Ms. Kan commented on the short and sweet meeting. She asked how the FDC understands the definition of the term “transgender.”

Vice Chair Walters stated that he would speak with Hayden Nevill to see if he could provide the FDC with a definition of the term.

Ms. Rogers stated that it was a good meeting with a good turnout. She stated she is eager to advance with a more involved communication and relationship with the FNSB.

Ms. Sanford thanked Ms. Slayton for providing everyone with the packet of information, and she encouraged everyone to read it. She stated she is amazed at how much local folks misunderstand Alaska Native culture and community. She stated that the project "Native Truth" expels some of the myths about Native Alaskans. She expressed disappointment in the City Attorney's opinion; she stated that she fundamentally disagrees with his interpretation of the City ordinance. She stated she will push the limits on the issue of FDC authority and power for the remainder of her term.

Ms. Webb thanked everyone who spoke and presented. She also expressed appreciation for the packet Ms. Slayton provided. She asked whether anyone had looked into the possibility of appointing a student representative to the FDC.

Mr. Toelle spoke to the Diversity and Inclusion Committee which he serves on. He stated that the group recently met for their first meeting and suggested that the FDC interface with that group. He stated that he also serves on the National MS Society group.

Ms. Taylor stated that she is involved in many events, but no other members besides Ms. Rogers have ever really taken interest. She indicated she would like to see the FDC get more involved with events and activities.

Ms. Rogers expressed agreement with Ms. Taylor. She stated that it is difficult to get people involved, and she would like members to rethink participation at community events.

Mr. Butler agreed that the FDC should do its best to bring in the FNSB as an equal participant like the City of Fairbanks because the body represents the entire community. He spoke to how Native Americans acquired medical care through a treaty in the 1800s and to how it was rudimentary and subpar for many years. He stated that, fortunately, Alaska has become intelligent and organized and is now an example for the rest of the nation. He spoke to his own experiences in using medical services in Alaska. He encouraged everyone to visit his Facebook page and read his writing over the last few weeks. **Mr. Butler** stated that the nation, state, and community are under terrific political strife currently and commented that the majority of everyone present is likely directly impacted by what is going on politically. He stated that he is becoming increasingly optimistic about the FDC, and it is up to the FDC to firm up its infrastructure and progress.

Ms. Slayton stated that it would be good to learn more about the Southern Poverty Law Center and the services they provide. She stated they have resources for councils and committees like the FDC. She suggested that FDC members sign up for their productions and mailings.

Vice Chair Walters suggested that Ms. Slayton send a link to the information to Clerk Snider to forward to the membership so they could learn more about it.

Ms. Borges apologized for missing several meetings. She expressed sadness that the FDC lost another member. She stated that FDC members should attend each other's functions as the group is there to represent. She questioned whether the FDC has any promotional items on hand. She asked whether there had been any funds budgeted specifically for the FDC.

Ms. Foster-Snow stated that they could get more bookmarks. She stated that there is not a line item in the budget specifically for the FDC, but that the Mayor has asked members to make requests to him as necessary for needed items.

Ms. Borges wished everyone a Happy Holiday season.

Ms. Foster-Snow stated that she would be happy to send a letter to local high schools to see if there is any interest in serving on the FDC. She stated that she has served at the Night of Hope with Mr. Lee's group in the past, and she encouraged people to attend the event. She stated that she feels the FDC should revisit the "potty project" and clarify its support of the project. She stated that there has been some misrepresentation of the project—even at the City Council level.

Ms. Rogers stated that Ms. Foster-Snow made a heartfelt and passionate statement about the importance of having private restroom space available to everyone. She agreed that some clarification should be provided. **Ms. Foster-Snow** stated that members of the public have spoken to the issue at City Council meetings and have misinterpreted what the project is about.

Vice Chair Walters stated that the "potty project" is about asking local businesses to make single toilet restrooms unisex. He stated that FDC's title is on the letter of support for the project. He mentioned the PFLAG survey that he asked Clerk Snider to send out to the membership; he stated that there were about 85 responses from community members. **Vice Chair Walters** stated that there was a recent town hall-type meeting at the Unitarian Church on LGBTQ issues, and over 60 people attended. He stated that there has been an outpouring of support and interest lately for PFLAG and that there will be a follow-up meeting at the Noel Wien Library on December 16 from 2 – 3:30 p.m. He mentioned some recent emails from a lady in California to the FDC regarding the Supreme Court case about the wedding cake; he questioned whether it is something the FDC would like to address. He spoke to materials provided by the City on behalf of the FDC for various events. **Vice Chair Walters** expressed his regret that Mr. Cole resigned from the FDC, and he indicated that he would like the Mayor and the FDC to send him a nice note to thank him for his service. He stated he would try to bring a thank you note to the next meeting for everyone to sign.

Ms. Slayton questioned how many people present had done the ancestry.com DNA test. She stated that she did one and was surprised by the results. She encouraged everyone to take the test and commented that it makes one sit back and think.

MEETING DATES

The next Regular Meeting of the FDC is scheduled for Tuesday, January 9, 2018

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Toelle, seconded by **Ms. Sanford**, moved to ADJOURN the meeting.

Hearing no objection, **Vice Chair Walters** declared the meeting
ADJOURNED at 7:27 p.m.



Mayor Jim Matherly, Chair



D. Danyielle Snider, CMC, City Clerk

Transcribed by: DS