



FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, AUGUST 14, 2023
FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
800 CUSHMAN STREET, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

The City Council convened at 6:30 p.m. on the above date, following a 5:30 p.m. Work Session for information on the Balancing Act Budget Simulator, to conduct a Regular Meeting of the Fairbanks City Council via Zoom webinar and at the City Council Chambers, 800 Cushman Street, Fairbanks, Alaska, with Mayor David Pruhs presiding and with the following Council Members in attendance:

Council Members Present: Jerry Cleworth, Seat A
 June Rogers, Seat B
 Sue Sprinkle, Seat C
 Crystal Tidwell, Seat D
 Lonny Marney, Seat E
 John Ringstad, Seat F

Absent: None

Also Present: Margarita Bell, Chief Financial Officer
 D. Danyielle Snider, City Clerk
 Thomas Chard, City Attorney
 Michael Sanders, Chief of Staff
 Jeff Jacobson, Public Works Director
 Ron Dupee, Police Chief (remotely)
 Scott Raygor, Fire Chief
 Andrew Cocco, Assistant Fire Chief
 Kraig Bryan, Deputy Fire Marshal
 Kristi Merideth, Dispatch Manager (remotely)
 Jessica Krier, Human Resources Generalist
 Clem Clooten, Building Official
 Brynn Butler, Housing Coordinator
 Brenda McFarlane, Crisis Now Coordinator (remotely)
 Alejandro Perez Olivares, Legal Intern

INVOCATION

The invocation was given by City Clerk Danyielle Snider.

FLAG SALUTATION

Mayor Pruhs asked Ms. Sprinkle to lead the flag salutation.

CEREMONIAL MATTERS (Proclamations, Introductions, Recognitions, Awards)

Fire Chief Raygor and Assistant Fire Chief Cocco performed a pinning ceremony for Kraig Bryan and administered the oath of office in recognition of his recent promotion to Battalion Chief.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS

Clerk Note: Names of citizens who provide comments may not be spelled correctly if their name was illegible on the sign-up sheet.

Aaron Lojewski, 1600 Washington Drive, Fairbanks – A. Lojewski noted that he was attending as a private citizen and was not representing any other organization. He spoke to the City's Permanent Fund and stated that the annual rate of return is approximately 5-6%, with the City drawing all but 0.5-1% of that annually. He stated that the amount drawn only leaves about 1% of earnings which does not protect against inflation. He indicated that there are ways to increase the return, and he hopes that those who oversee the account will be mindful of that during future budgetary processes.

Jody Stack – J. Stack shared that she represents the "Right to Life" organization and that she and her husband have been active in the program for several years. She recalled an incident with an abandoned baby in December 2021, and she asked the Council to support the creation of Safe Haven baby boxes at the hospital and at fire stations. She explained that the boxes would provide a place for someone in dire need of help, who cannot care for a baby, to drop off the baby safely and anonymously. She added that within minutes, someone would come to take care of the baby. She stated that is a better option than leaving a baby in a cardboard box at some intersection. She asked the Council for support to get something like that established in the Fairbanks community.

Mr. Ringstad asked J. Stack if she was pursuing the idea in other areas of the Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB). J. Stack responded that they are starting within the City at locations where personnel is available 24/7.

Ms. Rogers asked J. Stack if she had already spoken with the folks at the Fire Department. J. Stack replied that she believes a fellow member of the organization has. **Ms. Rogers** shared some information about other services of the City that could be pursued.

Victor Buberger, PO Box 58192, Fairbanks, AK 99711 – V. Buberger commended Public Works on pothole maintenance. He asked how the City can find money to pay for raises for employees but cannot afford to repair "third-world" type streets in the community and demolish the Polaris Building. He stated millions of dollars being spent on the new Gaffney-Airport-Richardson-Steese (GARS) intersection, which he feels is a mess. He thanked the Mayor and Council for their efforts.

Ms. Sprinkle asked V. Buberger if he was aware that the GARS intersection was a State of Alaska Department of Transportation (DOT) project. V. Buberger replied that he was aware but stated that he still thinks the City can find money for streets.

Ms. Rogers asked V. Buberger if he takes his concerns to the DOT at their public meetings. V. Buberger answered that he does not.

George Shoogukuwrk – G. Shoogukuwrk spoke to an issue regarding the location of the bus stop in relation to the location of the VA. He stated that he has to walk one mile to get to the VA from the closest bus stop, and he is a handicapped person and a two-time Vietnam veteran. He stated that he does not think individuals in his situation should have to walk that far for those services.

Mayor Pruhs called for any additional testimony, in-person and online, and hearing none, declared Citizens' Comments closed.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to APPROVE the Agenda and Consent Agenda.

Ms. Sprinkle pulled Ordinance No. 6259, item 12(d) of New Business, from the Consent Agenda.

Mr. Marney pulled Ordinance No. 6260, item 12(e) of New Business, from the Consent Agenda.

Mayor Pruhs called for objection to the APPROVAL of the Agenda, as Amended and, hearing none, so ORDERED.

City Clerk Snider read the Consent Agenda, as Amended, into the record.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

a) Regular Meeting Minutes of July 10, 2023

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA.

SPECIAL ORDERS

a) The Fairbanks City Council heard interested citizens concerned with the following Liquor License application for renewal:

Lic. #	DBA	License Type	Licensee	Address
4763	Bobby's Downtown	Beverage Dispensary	Delta Epsilon	609 2nd Avenue

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to WAIVE PROTEST on the Liquor License application for renewal.

Mayor Pruhs called for testimony and hearing none, declared Public Testimony closed.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO WAIVE PROTEST ON THE LIQUOR LICENSE APPLICATION FOR RENEWAL AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

MAYOR'S COMMENTS AND REPORT

Mayor Pruhs introduced Nadine Winters from Fairbanks Neighborhood Housing Services (FNHS) and asked her to speak. He noted that he and Mr. Ringstad are also involved with the FNHS board.

N. Winters gave a short summary about her organization's mission to assist individuals and families with things like affordable housing and down payment assistance. She stated they are focused on finding ways to increase housing options in the area. She spoke about a recent success, their Fairbanks Housing Improvement program, which can provide matching grants to owners of vacant or blighted properties. She explained that the property owners, in turn, commit to renting to those who have been experiencing homelessness or who are eligible for other low-income housing services, for a minimum of five years. N. Winters stated they have been looking for funding because Fairbanks has many properties which fit that description while, at the same time, Fairbanks is suffering a housing shortage. She stated FNHS has secured \$1MM and is working to increase that to \$2MM. She referenced a successful program in Vermont, which they intend to mimic, and shared that the statistics for the Vermont program show that most property owners contribute far more than the minimum amounts required. She stated they are working with the Borough to acquire property to develop new housing as well as identifying ways to convert vacant commercial buildings into residential properties. She stated FNHS is also speaking with the Rasmuson Foundation and hopes to have a pilot program ready to launch soon.

Ms. Sprinkle asked how they decide which projects to select. N. Winters explained that they are aware of lists of vacant/blighted properties that exist; however, the VT program left it up to the private sector to apply. She stated they are inclined to do the same by advertising the program and seeing who applies. She indicated that the tricky part will be drafting and defending a definition of what constitutes a "vacant and blighted property." She stated it is important to not lose sight of the larger issue, which is the need for new housing development in the area. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked N. Winters to confirm the source of the funds they have acquired and whether those will remain in their possession for a limited time or until spent. N. Winters stated it is federal funding, and she believes there is a five-year limit on appropriation.

Mr. Cleworth asked N. Winters to clarify details on the mechanics of the program. N. Winters explained that the Vermont program specified that the program was for "someone exiting homelessness." She stated that Fairbanks already has affordable housing services in place, so the program would likely include income verification and a limit tied to a percentage of the federal poverty level for the area, adjusted for family size.

Mayor Pruhs asked Brynn Buter, Housing Coordinator, to report on a current grant opportunity.

B. Butler explained she has the opportunity to apply for the Healthy and Equitable Communities Grant through the State Department of Health and the Division of Public Health. She shared that the deadline is August 18, and the program would support underserved groups who are at a disproportionate risk of COVID-19 and who deal with housing uncertainty. She stated her hope is to help prevent homelessness by making funds available for up to two months of past-due rent, and she commented that it is much harder to get people housed than it is to keep them housed. She stated an agreement with landlords would be pursued to pay for past-due rent, stop any eviction efforts, and give time for the tenant to stabilize and secure resources to be self-sustaining again. **Mayor Pruhs** added that the grant application would be done through the City, but there would be no cost to the City.

Ms. Rogers asked for details about the funding amount and the timeframe. B. Butler explained that she is requesting \$75,000, and it is a one-year program. She stated they estimate an average assistance award of \$1,500 for one month, with a two-month limit, which would allow up to 25 families to receive assistance.

Mr. Ringstad requested clarity on what is being asked of the Council. B. Butler stated that the application deadline is August 18, but the resolution to authorize the application will not come until the next Council meeting.

Mr. Marney asked whether individuals seeking assistance would be given only one shot. B. Butler responded that they will only be eligible to receive help once. She stated she hopes folks will seek help when they are only one month behind to allow more families to be served; however, in her experience, many do not ask for assistance until they are more than one month past due.

Ms. Rogers asked for details on the nature of the grant and the City's role. CFO Bell explained that this would be a pass-through grant where the City would apply for and receive the funds, then disperse them to the entity which would be set up to facilitate the program. Chief of Staff Sanders added that the reason the Housing and Homeless Coalition could not offer the program directly is that it is a reimbursement grant and there is no way they could front the money for that.

Mr. Cleworth asked if B. Butler had spoken with G. Shoogukuwrk, who had spoken earlier. B. Butler replied that she, along with Mr. Marney, have been in communication with him.

B. Butler next gave an update on homelessness in the community and shared that there has been a lot of movement towards establishing warming stations for the coming winter. She stated there are many challenges with planning and coordinating resources such as space, utilities, staffing, and funding. She shared that they are diligently making efforts to prepare for the cold months ahead.

Mayor Pruhs asked B. Butler to ensure that G. Shoogukuwrk received the appropriate contact info for the FNSB Van Tran program.

B. Butler shared with the Council that in the past month they have successfully housed eight individuals through the coordinated entry system, and they are making headway.

Ms. Sprinkle asked B. Butler if she is still speaking to people in Golden Heart Plaza (GHP) area. B. Butler stated that she still does occasionally, but the presence and efforts of Officer Elzey has been more beneficial. She stated she is aware that the Mayor and Chief of Staff also visit the GHP regularly; she stated she has been focusing her efforts in other areas but still visits occasionally.

Ms. Rogers asked what the Council needed to do to officially accept the grant funds. CFO Bell reiterated the timeframe details that B. Butler shared regarding the application deadline and forthcoming resolution. She stated that if the Council rejects the resolution, they can withdraw the grant application. **Mayor Pruhs** suggested adding Ms. Rogers as a sponsor to the resolution, to which she concurred.

Mayor Pruhs invited Building Official Clooten to share an update on abatements. C. Clooten shared that there are about ten to eleven properties that are making progress. He shared that of the

two on 11th Avenue, one is being remodeled and the other will be torn down before winter. He stated that one of the Front Street properties will be going out to bid for demolition. He added that another property on Front Street has unpaid taxes, and the City is working with the Borough to obtain that property so it can be demolished.

Ms. Sprinkle asked how the conversation is going in regard to the property across the street from there. C. Clooten explained that the owner is in California, and they are starting the abatement process; he summarized the standard timeline.

Mr. Marney inquired about abatement efforts for the property on 5th Avenue. **Mayor Pruhs** responded that that particular item would be discussed at the next meeting.

Mayor Pruhs spoke to the issue of city streets and stated that is one of his priorities. He shared that the City did not receive a grant to reconstruct roads in the Island Homes area after applying a second time. He stated that project would cost \$9MM alone and \$20MM when Golden Heart Utility (GHU) work is factored in. He stated he has some ideas for infrastructure after his recent trip to Homer for the Alaska Municipal League (AML) meetings, and he intends to have the Engineering Department put together a short list of focused projects which they can take directly to representatives in Washington D.C. He indicated that federal funding may be the best approach, and he hopes to have proposals ready to submit by January for March appropriation.

Ms. Sprinkle asked why the City did not receive the grant the Mayor mentioned. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that he was not entirely sure. He explained that the application was initially denied, then the City was encouraged to reapply and was coached on how to submit the application for better chance of success. He stated that the City did so, then was denied again, being told the request was not applicable to the grant's purpose. He stated he intends to make the next attempt in person, ensuring the requests are exactly as they need to be and that they are to the right entity. He asked that the Council begin considering legislative priorities for the following year and, to avoid being rushed, he would like to meet to discuss priorities in October versus November or December.

COUNCIL MEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. Cleworth spoke to the topic of the baby boxes and stated he was under the impression that something similar had been done in the past. Fire Chief Raygor stated that, to his knowledge, it had not. He stated they had been approached by the Rasmuson Foundation before, and it was a feasible project with a cost range of \$5,000-\$10,000 for the box itself, plus some construction work for installation. He summarized the process of what might occur should a baby be dropped off and stated there are feasible locations but stated it is a project that has not been picked up by anyone.

Mr. Cleworth also addressed G. Shoogukuwrk's earlier comments to explain that the bus system is operated by the Borough and that the Mayor's recommendation of the Van Tran was great.

Ms. Rogers asked about the Rasmuson Foundation's interest in the baby box project. Chief Raygor clarified that someone on the Foundation's board is passionate about the project and has the support to pursue it, but he is unsure if they have funding allocated. **Ms. Rogers** stated that she would like to get the contact info for that board member so she can follow up.

Ms. Rogers also shared having recently held another “Pizza in the Plaza with Police” event, which was a tremendous success. She stated a diverse group of people enjoyed the opportunity to connect and that Chief Dupee, Captain Warner, and Officer Elzey all participated, as well as Mr. Marney and Crisis Now Coordinator Brenda McFarlane. She thanked Julie Jones from Festival Fairbanks for help with logistics. **Mayor Pruhs** commented that those types of activities are exactly what the GHP is meant for.

Ms. Sprinkle stated that she was not able to participate in a ride-along last week with FPD due to illness but that she plans to reschedule. She stated she had an amazing time volunteering at Stone Soup Café and commended the work being done there. She commented that she is proud of the efforts to help the community in a beautiful way.

Ms. Tidwell shared her positive experiences at the Tanana Valley State Fair and stated that she competed with Rocky Barnette of iHeart Media to raise money for the food bank. She stated they raised \$2,500 and hoped that the momentum would continue. She thanked the Mayor for the chance to visit the Polaris Building one last time and stated she is excited for the project.

Mr. Marney thanked representatives from the Right to Life organization for their comments and stated he felt that the baby box project should be treated with urgency. He thanked V. Buberger for his comments and commended B. Butler for her work in and service to the homeless community.

Mr. Ringstad shared that he, Ms. Sprinkle, and Mr. Marney, recently participated in a charity golf tournament organized by former Council Member Valerie Therrien.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a) Resolution No. 5076 – A Resolution Amending the City Schedule of Fees and Charges for Services by Adding a Service Fee for Annual Technical Fire Inspections and Increasing the Fee for Fire Inspection, Investigation, and Technical Services. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs. POSTPONED from the Regular Meeting of July 24, 2023.

*At the July 24 regular meeting, **Mr. Cleworth**, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to APPROVE Resolution No. 5076. This motion remained on the floor.*

Mr. Cleworth shared that the resolution had been initially postponed in order to give more time to review the mechanics of the various fees and services. He stated that because of the full work session agenda, the item was not addressed. **Mayor Pruhs** suggested another motion to postpone, allowing adequate time to discuss the details. **Mr. Cleworth** concurred, stating that he needs a better understanding of what the City would be charging. He stated he has been critical of some of the things the City used to do, and further review is vital.

Mr. Cleworth, seconding by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to POSTPONE Resolution No. 5076 to the Regular Council Meeting of September 11, 2023.

Mr. Marney agreed that many fees need to be reviewed for potential changes.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO POSTPONE RESOLUTION NO. 5076 TO THE REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2023 AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

- b) Ordinance No. 6256 – An Ordinance to Present to the Qualified Voters of the City of Fairbanks the Question of Whether to Ratify a Pass-through Loan from the Alaska Clean Water Fund to Golden Heart Utilities for Up to \$8.2 Million for Bio-solids Incineration Testing, Grit Removal, and Ultraviolet Disinfection at the City-owned Wastewater Treatment Facility. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

Mr. Marney, seconded by **Mr. Cleworth**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6256.

Mayor Pruhs called for public testimony.

Marc Harmon, Director of Administration, Golden Heart Utilities (GHU) – M. Harmon thanked the Mayor and CFO Bell for their work on the ordinance and for the support of the Council.

Mayor Pruhs explained that if the City is used as the entity for a loan like this, GHU would receive a lower rate and savings could be passed on to ratepayers. M. Harmon confirmed that is correct.

Ms. Rogers highlighted this as a positive example of partnerships that can occur for the sake of the community. M. Harmon agreed and added that there is legislation in the works that would make such benefits available to utility companies without having to take this kind of approach, but he stated that it has been a positive opportunity for them to work with the Council.

Mr. Cleworth stated that in the past GHU tried to take the waste and make it into something commercially viable. He spoke to problems and successes in that regard and asked M. Harmon if this new method would completely incinerate the waste, leaving nothing available to use as fertilizer. M. Harmon confirmed it would render the bio-solids inert. He explained that it is a thermal remediation process, using heat and pressure, which is technically not incineration.

Ms. Sprinkle asked what would be done with the waste. M. Harmon explained that the process reduces the total volume of waste by upwards of 90%, but the remaining solids are landfilled.

Victor Buberger – V. Buberger asked for more details about what a pass-through loan is and who Alaska Clean Water is.

Mayor Pruhs called for any additional testimony and, hearing none, declared Public Testimony closed.

CFO Bell explained that the loan method would allow federal funds to be passed through the State of Alaska through a loan program.

Mr. Marney requested to be added as a sponsor to Ordinance No. 6256. With the concurrence of all Council members, **Mayor Pruhs** directed that every Council member be added as a sponsor.

Mr. Ringstad, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6256 by substituting the amended, proposed version.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6256 BY SUBSTITUTING THE AMENDED, PROPOSED VERSION AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6256, AS AMENDED, AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6256 ADOPTED.

- c) Ordinance No. 6258 – An Ordinance Amending Schedule B of the Collective Bargaining Agreement Between the City of Fairbanks and the Public Safety Employees Association (PSEA). Introduced by Mayor Pruhs. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

Mr. Marney, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6258.

Mayor Pruhs called for public testimony and, hearing none, declared Public Testimony closed.

Mr. Marney, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6258 by substituting the amended, proposed version.

Attorney Chard explained that although this is procedurally out of the ordinary, the bargaining parties have agreed to the proposed substitute. He stated that the version being distributed maintains all components that had been previously accepted, with the only change being the removal of the two recruit classifications.

Mr. Cleworth asked why the change was being proposed. Chief Dupee explained that the timing of new recruits graduating the academy and advancing to their field training and probationary periods results in every new recruit needing to bypass the two wage classifications being considered for removal, where they would face a drop in pay. He stated the department wants to avoid discrepancies between a realistic starting salary and what appears in the wage schedule.

Ms. Sprinkle asked for clarification on one wage category that appeared to be very low. Chief Dupee shared that when a recruit is at the academy, the schedule of work can vary greatly day to day, and as such, recruits are paid for 16 hours a day for seven days a week, rather than requiring attendees to track every single hour worked while they are away for training. He stated that that

wage is the equivalent of a Year 1 Officer working 40 hours a week. He stated that someone leaving the academy to work at the Fairbanks Police Department (FPD) would see a relative drop in wages, which should be corrected.

Mr. Cleworth pointed out that those recruits coming are still in training, riding along with a partner. He pointed out that of the last two, one did not make it through the academy, and the other quit during field training. He stated he is not necessarily opposed to the changes, but the changes were not discussed during negotiations nor were they addressed during Executive Sessions. He stated he is having a problem with the procedural aspect of the proposed amendment.

Mr. Marney asked why the fiscal note shows a cost of \$7,000. CFO Bell explained that technically, the elimination of the two recruit classifications results in an increased cost; she stated, however, that the City already budgets new officer wages at the Year 1 Officer salary level.

Ms. Sprinkle asked for more clarity on wages during the transition from academy to field training and beyond. Chief Dupee clarified that during the academy, recruits make a wage equivalent to a Year 1 Officer classification. He stated it does not look good to lower their wage to that of Recruit II or Recruit III after successfully completing the academy. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked why this item could not wait until it was time to reopen the collective bargaining agreement (CBA). Chief Dupee stated they cannot advertise a starting wage of ~\$38/hour if a recruit will make that only for a few months then drop to ~\$34/hour. He stated the Alaska State Troopers (AST) are advertising \$39.15/hour as a starting recruit wage.

Mayor Pruhs added that some great discussions occurred earlier in the day amongst staff, but it always came down to the truth in advertising. Chief Dupee shared that in reality, they have not had a new recruit go through the academy and experience the drop in pay since 2019. He stated this proposal is meant to be proactive and to prevent potential grievances.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6258 BY SUBSTITUTING THE AMENDED, PROPOSED VERSION AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Sprinkle, Rogers, Marney, Ringstad, Tidwell

NAYS: Cleworth

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

Mr. Cleworth spoke to the overall financial impact of FPD objectives the Council has been involved with in recent months. He stated he felt that they have had many good discussions on the topics, but the red flags continue to pop up. He expressed serious concerns for the coming budget due to the changes, and he stated he wanted to recap the chronology of events. **Mr. Cleworth** stated he first heard of the problem when Capt. Warner visited him in April, and at the time, he was told that the FPD was not competitive with other localities which resulted in their shortage of officers. He stated that last year, CFO Bell put a lot of work into comparisons between similar agencies and their compensation packages, and the Council set aside enough money in the budget to address the issue. He commented that the last round of negotiations went well, and the City could confidently claim that it was competitive. He stated he understands that since then, everyone has been rushing to make changes in order to keep up, but the solutions offered in April included the increased hiring incentive of \$60,000 and the \$10,000 supplemental retirement and life

insurance plan. **Mr. Cleworth** stated that the cost savings of the reduction of vacant, budgeted-for positions was worked out in order to cover the cost of the increases, and the City is now higher than any other comparable locality in the state. He went on to state that then came another request for a wage increase of \$4/hour, which is not what he would have liked to have seen done. He stated that it was proposed as being effective only through the end of the year, which put pressure on the Council to make it permanent, thus now it being a change to the CBA without actually opening the entire CBA up for other changes. He stated that this action exceeds all savings that the City would have had from the elimination of the seven vacant positions. **Mr. Cleworth** stated that the ordinance on the floor adds another \$150K to the 2024 budget, and he pointed out that the total increase for all FPD items the Council has handled over the summer totals over \$1MM in cost. He stated that the items will exhaust pretty much all extra money the City would have for 2024, and he listed some other departmental increases that are expected. He stated that the City's revenues will not be able to keep up, and the budget will be in the red by \$157,000. He stated that should be alarming to everyone, and the only wildcard the City has for potential additional income is from new construction, which cannot be guaranteed. **Mr. Cleworth** stated that the Council still has two labor contracts coming up, and one of them is for Dispatch, another department that is in need of serious review and consideration. He stated he does not see how the City will be able to keep up with the expenditures. He stated he has been involved with close to 30 budgetary processes over the years and that this one scares him. He indicated that there is a smarter way to go about helping the FPD, but the Council is committing funds before working on the budget. He cautioned that changing the CBAs for Fire and Police was the wrong way to approach the issues and stated that the Council could have offered bonuses with some strings attached that would have resulted in a similar outcome, allowing the City to spend money from the current budget without committing 2024 funds. He expressed opposition to Ordinance No. 6258.

Mr. Cleworth asked CFO Bell a multi-part question:

- He stated that this will be the second CBA the Council has adjusted outside of normal negotiations: first the Fire Department, where they increased to a 13-person shift, and now the FPD actions. He asked the CFO if she supports this approach.
 - CFO Bell shared her opinion that it is best to wait to make changes until active negotiations, unless it is necessary to avoid a negative impact on the City.
- Next, he discussed the \$10,000 supplemental retirement benefit approved for the FPD and stated that the City usually does not use the AST as a comparison because the nature of that job is significantly different in that an officer can expect to live and work in their community when they work for the City. He asked the CFO how she found the comparison.
 - CFO Bell stated that when she reviewed the AST package, she found that the City was competitive, with FPD's overall package totaling \$61 and the AST's at \$67.21.
- He asked the CFO, since she has to work with all departments and the Mayor to prepare the annual budget, if she was concerned about next year.
 - CFO Bell responded that the discussions had with the Mayor thus far have included the reality that he will have some tough decisions to make, and he has stated that he is willing to make them.

Mr. Cleworth stated that the Council – not just the Mayor – will have to make hard decisions. He stated they have painted themselves into a corner where the bottom line will include no surplus. He explained that when this has happened in the past, the Council was left to make hard cuts in areas they did not want to. He stated that the City had the largest windfall he has ever seen in 2023,

and all of it and more has been spent. He acknowledged that he is guilty of voting in favor of some of those objectives, but the Council has gone too far and should not be adding new positions and opening CBAs earlier than necessary.

Mr. Marney asked how many of the 37 FPD officers have been with the City for at least ten years and what that number would be three years from now. Chief Dupee replied that he believes six qualify for retirement now, and in three years it would be about ten. **Mr. Marney** stated that it seems the impact of the \$10,000 supplemental retirement is not as heavy right now, but there will be a larger impact in three years.

Ms. Sprinkle stated she believes that, as far as adding positions, these are imperative people which they are missing. She stated that the added battalion chief may actually save the City money. Addressing Mr. Cleworth's earlier comment about how it is nice for officers to be able to live in the same community where they work, she stated that is no good if officers have to work so much overtime that they cannot see their families. She stated she could not vote on the effort to increase the bed tax earlier this year but that there is funding to be found. She stated that new revenue came through with the expectation that it would go towards essential services, primarily public safety. She stated that while she does not take Mr. Cleworth's comments lightly, she does not share the idea that the Council is burning through money just to do so. She stated she wants the police to feel valued.

Mr. Cleworth responded by agreeing that he is also not a fan of forced overtime, but when they increase the minimum staffing level for a shift to 13 or add a new position, more forced overtime is created. He stated that he is favor of increasing the FPD salary or providing the supplemental retirement benefit, but the City cannot afford to do both.

Mayor Pruhs stated that from the beginning there was a plan, and the Council has worked through that plan. He stated that he used savings from the reduction of positions to give the Council the options for a wage increase, and the Council chose the lowest option. He recounted that the Council voted to amend the budget to implement that increase, then indicated that they wanted to ensure that the increase went into the CBA, which Ordinance No. 6258 does. He expressed hope that the City will retain more employees with the retention incentive. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that bonuses do not accomplish the same retention goals as a supplement retirement plan and that every day when he comes to the office, his first discussions are with CFO Bell. He stated that there are additional revenue items that seem to be forgotten, and he reminded the Council that in 2023, he gave the Council a \$1MM budget surplus. He stated he feels that he has been transparent with sharing all information as it has come in and that the Council has been spending money; he stated that Mr. Cleworth is right in many ways, but the FPD is also declining in numbers. He stated that, while he was in Homer, he was proud to get negative comments from individuals in places such as Sitka, who did not appreciate the new, very high lateral transfer bonus for FPD and that, for once, Fairbanks was number one. He commented that maybe the FPD will fill its ranks, which is what the initiative is meant to do. He stated that Ordinance No. 6258 is what was asked of him to make sure the \$4/hour increase did not expire at the end of 2023.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6258, AS AMENDED, AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Ringstad, Tidwell, Rogers, Sprinkle, Marney

NAYS: Cleworth
Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6255, as Amended, ADOPTED.

NEW BUSINESS

- a) Resolution No. 5077 – A Resolution Authorizing the City of Fairbanks to Apply for an Accept Funding from the Bureau of Justice Assistance for the FFY2023 Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- b) Resolution No. 5078 – A Resolution Awarding a Contract to Alcan Builders, Inc. for the Public Works Fuel Pump Enclosures Project in the Amount of \$297,900. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- c) Resolution No. 5079 – A Resolution to Honor Sergeant Allen David Brandt by Renaming the Fairbanks Police Station the “Sergeant Allen Brandt Police Station and Emergency Communications Center.” Introduced by Mayor Pruhs and All City Council Members.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- d) Ordinance No. 6259 – An Ordinance Amending the 2023 Operating and Capital Budgets for the Third Time. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

Mr. Marney, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to ADVANCE Ordinance No. 6259.

Ms. Sprinkle stated that she requested to pull the ordinance to get clarity about revenue item #7 in the fiscal note. Regarding a transfer of \$500,000 to the City Permanent Fund, **Ms. Sprinkle** asked who selected that number and asked about the reasoning behind it. **Mayor Pruhs** responded that he was the one who selected the amount. He stated that the purpose was to move funds into higher interest-bearing destinations, especially given the great rates currently available and added that this is one of the reasons the City had such a significant windfall in 2023. He stated that reserves are still more than sufficient – 50% over the required amount – so the City can afford it.

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Rogers**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6259 by reducing the amount being transferred to the Permanent Fund to \$250,000, and by transferring \$250,000 to the Capital Fund.

Mr. Cleworth explained that the Permanent Fund was never designed to be inflation proof, but it is good to put additional funds in from time to time. He stated that it gives the City increased returns and helps with the General Fund. He stated he is more concerned with the General Fund, as City roads deteriorate and the City is denied grants. He stated there are preventative maintenance issues that the City is not staying on top of and as they saw on the last ordinance, and any additional funds the City has is getting spent quickly. He indicated that he wants to be protective of projects

and equipment the City may need and would love to get to a point where the City can redo the streets of an entire subdivision as has been done in the past. He stated that the City did not receive FAST Planning funds this year, and that is his reasoning for the amendment.

Mr. Ringstad expressed concern about expected increases in certain areas, given the recent spike in fuel prices, which will add to the cost of snow clearing and other areas. He wondered if the Council should hold off to see if there is a surplus at the end of the year and take this action then.

Mr. Marney recalled that in the last work session, the Council discussed how aggressive it needs to be with the Permanent Fund, and it seems to him that they should follow up on that topic.

Ms. Sprinkle asked for clarification on Mr. Ringstad's comments regarding a potential delay in this action, and if this is something the Council should wait to pursue. **Mr. Ringstad** responded that he was speaking in favor of the amendment, splitting the proposed amount with the intent to put half into the Capital Fund, to provide some cushion for potential increases through the end of the year. **Mayor Pruhs** added that there is no reason not to move the funds now, and their fiscal position is not negatively impacted in any way; rather there is a chance to do the City some good.

Mr. Marney asked for CFO Bell's thoughts. CFO Bell reiterated that, as the Mayor explained, this is a great opportunity to put money into the Permanent Fund at a time when the City is seeing significant benefits from the investment, which in turn reinvests itself into the General Fund.

Mr. Cleworth pointed out that within the fiscal note, the Council can see some slipping in the Capital Fund. He stated that his amendment is an effort to help with that.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6259 BY REDUCING THE AMOUNT BEING TRANSFERRED TO THE PERMANENT FUND TO \$250,000, AND BY TRANSFERRING \$250,000 TO THE CAPITAL FUND AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Rogers, Marney, Ringstad, Tidwell, Cleworth

NAYS: Sprinkle

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED

Mr. Cleworth addressed another item, the addition of a full-time clerk position for FPD. He reiterated his concerns about not adding new positions given the current budgetary challenges. He stated he would be in favor of funding the one full-time, temporary clerk for the remainder of the year to help the department get caught up, but not both positions. He asked what the cost would be for that. CFO Bell responded that the amount would be \$27,300.

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6259 by funding one full-time temporary clerk position for FPD for 2023, rather than one temporary and one permanent position, and reducing the associated line item from \$54,600 to \$27,300.

Mr. Marney asked for more information regarding the scope of work for the temporary clerk position that was requested. Chief Dupee explained that the positions were supposed to have been included in a previous budget amendment but had been left out. He explained that the intent for the job is to get records moved out of their unheated, cold storage location and into a more suitable

place. He stated that when record requests come in the middle of the winter, the FPD hopes to not have to battle the elements to go through boxes of records that have been weathered at 40 below. He stated that the other purpose of the positions is to assist with body camera video work. He stated that the FPD spends significant time going through video files to redact confidential information to ensure information can be released. He stated that they are somewhat cutting services by tasking other employees to do the work while neglecting other duties. He stated they are falling behind, and some other area of responsibility at the City will be affected.

Ms. Sprinkle asked for clarity on the cost and employment arrangement of the positions. CFO Bell explained that one position was intended to be temporary, expiring at the end of December while the other would be permanent and carry over into the next year. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked about legal obligations regarding court evidence and how that plays into consideration of the positions. Chief Dupee added that they have two evidence custodians and are in the process of hiring a third. He stated that the clerk positions would provide support when records requests come in, and he indicated that there is a lot of work involved in fulfilling these time-consuming requests.

Mr. Cleworth stated that every year when the Council goes through the budgeting process, each department can request additional staffing, and it is rare for any department not to. He stated that departments make a compelling case for the requested positions, and oftentimes they are right. He stated that the Mayor has to make the call as to whether the City has funds to grant the request, then it falls to the Council to approve. He stated that is the time to make those types of requests, when everything is in front of them – not how they have been handling things this year. He stated that if he was a department head, seeing that others are getting requests granted, he would be coming to the Council as well, rather than waiting for the normal budget process. He stated he feels the Council should wait a few months to decide what the City can do long-term and, until then, the Council can fund the temporary position to help provide the resource.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6259 AMEND Ordinance No. 6259 BY FUNDING ONE FULL-TIME TEMPORARY CLERK POSITION FOR FPD, RATHER THAN ONE TEMPORARY AND ONE PERMANENT POSITION, AND REDUCING THE ASSOCIATED LINE ITEM FROM \$54,600 TO \$27,300 AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED

MAYOR PRUHS CALLED FOR ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION AND, HEARING NONE, A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADVANCE ORDINANCE NO. 6259, AS AMENDED, AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6529, as Amended, ADVANCED.

- e) Ordinance No. 6260 – An Ordinance Establishing a Hiring Incentive Bonus for a Structural Code Compliance Inspector. Introduced by Council Member Sprinkle.

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to ADVANCE Ordinance 6260.

Ms. Sprinkle explained that recent discussions on abatements have made it clear that the position of a Structural Code Compliance Inspector, which is budgeted for but has sat vacant for a long time, is resulting in important work being left undone. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that the position has been posted for a couple years.

Mr. Ringstad asked to confirm that the position is budgeted for, vacant, and that the ordinance is simply to approve a hiring bonus. **Mayor Pruhs** confirmed and pointed out that the bonus would be funded through salary savings.

Mr. Marney asked where and how the position is advertised. He stated that the position was funded for \$99,280 in 2022, which seemed like a decent salary. HR Generalist Krier responded that the challenge is experience. She stated that for someone graduating with an engineering degree, the City is not competitive, especially when a potential candidate weighs the position against the option to work on the north slope. She stated she cannot speak to past years, but so far in 2023, the City has advertised the position on the “Government Jobs” website as well as “Indeed.” She stated that the City has reached out to the UAF Engineering Department and Engineering Club and had hoped that the past graduation season would result in some applications, but it has not. She stated the City hopes to do some social media pushes but have been holding off until the ordinance could be considered. **Mr. Marney** stated that he would hate to get into a habit of offering hiring bonuses all the time.

Ms. Rogers agreed with the sentiment but shared that they are in different times than in the past. She expressed hope to return to normal recruitment but stated for now they need act accordingly.

Ms. Tidwell asked to confirm the parameters of the bonus and whether the person would receive \$10,000 after six months and another \$10,000 after one year. She questioned whether the City would recoup funds if the individual did not stay for three years. CFO Bell explained that when someone resigns, the City checks to see if they have an outstanding reimbursement to the City, determine the exact amount, and have that taken from their final payment. She stated the City has not encountered the situation where a departing employee did not have enough leave or other compensation to deduct from. She stated it is possible that that could happen; however, that would be the typical manner in which the City could recoup any balance owed.

Mr. Cleworth stated he had questions more suited for the next work session and stated that he needs to get a better handle on the details and scope of work for existing staff.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADVANCE ORDINANCE NO. 6260 AS FOLLOWS:

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

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6560, ADVANCED.

- f) Ordinance No. 6261 – An Ordinance Authorizing the City of Fairbanks to Apply for Funds from the Alaska Division of Homeland Security for the FFY2023 Emergency Management Performance Grant and Amending the 2023 Operating Budget. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

ADVANCED on the CONSENT AGENDA

DISCUSSION ITEMS (Information and Reports)

- a) Committee Reports

Ms. Tidwell, Mr. Marney, Mr. Ringstad, Ms. Sprinkle, and Mr. Cleworth each stated that they had no committee reports.

Ms. Rogers shared that since the Council last met, she has attended meetings for Crisis Now, the Reentry Coalition, the Opioid Workgroup, and the Fairbanks Diversity Council. She shared that she attended the FNSB Assembly meeting the prior week and attends regular meetings of the Alaska Community Coalition for Housing and Homelessness. She stated that, for the Diversity Council, International Friendship Day is coming in October and shared that the event organizer is Rosalind Kan who does a great job coordinating volunteers and plans. She thanked Ms. Kan for all her efforts, especially while battling cancer. She also shared about a recent experience at an event for one of the local school community gardens.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TO THE CITY COUNCIL

- a) Reappointment to the Clay Street Cemetery Commission

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA.

- b) Appointment to the Fairbanks Diversity Council

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA.

- c) Fairbanks Diversity Council Meeting Minutes of May 9, 2023

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA.

- d) Clay Street Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes of July 5, 2023

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA.

COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Ringstad mentioned the start of school and being mindful of buses and children.

Ms. Sprinkle stated that she is starting to put together a slate of election workers and that anyone interested in helping should contact the City or Borough to get involved.

Mr. Cleworth expressed interest in amending the City Council's orders of business to combine Committee Reports with Council Member comments. He shared that well-known Fairbanksan Dave Kilbourn, married to the Chair of the Clay Street Cemetery Commission, Aldean Kilbourn, recently passed away. He extended sympathies to the Kilbourn family.

Ms. Tidwell stated that she had no comments.

Mr. Marney stated he had the honor of participating in the Pizza in the Plaza with Police and spoke about the bittersweet experience of saying goodbye to Officer Elzey. He stated he would love for Council member to sign a "thank you" card for Ofc. Elzey and commended Chief Dupee for the decision to hire Elzey for the seasonal role.

Ms. Rogers expressed appreciation for the Pizza in the Plaza with Police event and discussed the benefit these things provide for overall community connection. She expressed her sympathy and support for Ms. Kilbourn for her loss and highlighted the many things she contributes to the City.

Mayor Pruhs reminded the Council that he would be gone for the next meeting so that he could attend a celebration of life; he stated that Mr. Cleworth would fill in for him. Addressing Legal Intern Perez Olivares, **Mayor Pruhs** expressed appreciation for his service to the City over the summer and commended him for his work. He wished him well as he concludes his internship and stated that he hopes he learned a lot. Mr. Perez Olivares thanked Attorney Chard, the Council, and other City staff and expressed fondness of Fairbanks; he stated he hoped he could return. He stated that the experience gave him high hopes, and he sees the passion and commitment of everyone at the City. He stated he will be returning with a strong sense of civic pride.

CITY CLERK'S REPORT

Clerk Snider thanked Mr. Perez Olivares for his help over the summer, including spending a Saturday walking with Clerk's office staff in the Golden Days parade to promote local elections.

CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Attorney Chard echoed the appreciate for Mr. Perez Olivares and stated that he felt the summer legal internship was a success. He shared that the new Deputy Attorney will be starting later in the week, earlier than previously anticipated.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to ENTER an Executive Session to discuss Roberts, et al. v. City of Fairbanks, Settlement Discussion.

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

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to ENTER an Executive Session to discuss Malloy v. City of Fairbanks (S. 18739), Potential Settlement.

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

Mayor Pruhs called for a brief recess. The Council reconvened in Executive Session following the brief recess.

- a) *Roberts, et al. v. City of Fairbanks, et al.*, Settlement Discussion. (Executive Session entered at 8:54 p.m.)
- b) *Malloy v. City of Fairbanks* (S. 18739), Potential Settlement. (Executive Session entered at 9:12 p.m.)

The City Council met in Executive Sessions to discuss the above items. Each item was discussed and direction was given to the City Attorney, but no action was taken. The regular meeting resumed at 9:27 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

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

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

Mayor Pruhs declared the meeting adjourned at 9:27 p.m.



DAVID PRUHS, MAYOR

ATTEST:



D. DANYIELLE SMIDER, MMC, CITY CLERK

Transcribed by: CC