



FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, OCTOBER 9, 2023  
FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
800 CUSHMAN STREET, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

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The City Council convened at 6:30 p.m. on the above date, following a 5:30 p.m. Work Session on the Police Supplemental Retirement Plan, 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 Pruhs presiding and the following Councilmembers in attendance:

Councilmembers 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:                        D. Danyielle Snider, City Clerk  
                                         Thomas Chard, City Attorney  
                                         Michael Sanders, Chief of Staff  
                                         Ron Dupee, Police Chief (remotely)  
                                         Nathan Werner, Police Captain  
                                         Margarita Bell, Chief Financial Officer  
                                         Rick Sweet, Deputy Police Chief  
                                         Robert Pristash, City Engineer  
                                         Scott Raygor, Fire Chief (remotely)  
                                         Andrew Coccaro, Assistant Fire Chief (remotely)  
                                         Kristi Meredith, Dispatch Manager  
                                         Teal Soden, Public Information Officer (remotely)  
                                         Brenda McFarlane, Crisis Now Coordinator (remotely)  
                                         Kirsten Loaiza, Engineer II

**INVOCATION**

The invocation was given by City Clerk Danyielle Snider.

**FLAG SALUTATION**

Mayor Pruhs asked Mr. Cleworth to lead the flag salutation.

**CITIZENS' COMMENTS**

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

**Mayor Pruhs** shared that the Zoom link and passcode had been updated since the last meeting, and he will enforce the established rules for both in-person and online Citizens' Comments. He stated those rules include that preference is given to those physically present and that all wishing to speak must sign up in advance. He explained that the introduction of new language in the Council's Order of Business will, if adopted, require that comments made during Citizens' Comments pertain to City business. He stated the City Clerk has verified that the live radio broadcast can be muted, if needed, which will allow any commentary not suitable for public broadcast to continue but only in the Council Chambers. He stated that the Clerk also met with radio station staff to discuss procedures and protocols for any future incidents. **Mayor Pruhs** shared that the meeting audio posted to the City website was redacted, and there is a notification to listeners regarding the redaction, but the original audio file remains intact. He stated that the meeting minutes underwent a thorough drafting and review process to ensure accuracy without legitimizing the messages of the inappropriate comments.

Victor Buberger – V. Buberger acknowledged that the City has a lot on its plate but wondered about doing something for the “little guy.” He spoke about the lighting issue on City streets, as certain power poles have had bulbs out for over a year now, and he specifically referenced the lighting problem at the intersection of Trainor Gate Road and the Old Steese Highway. He offered to buy bulbs if the City was too broke to purchase some.

Killian Felt (via Zoom), Project Manager at Fairbanks Economic Development Corporation (FEDC) – K. Felt gave an update on current FEDC projects. She shared that they are running the fourth cohort of their Small Business Accelerator, which teaches business skills to those who do not come from a typical business background. She shared that they are also helping plan a winter solstice festival. K. Felt shared that after last year's success, they hope to put on another “Moose on the Loose” collaboration with local businesses. She stated the Mayor asked the FEDC to do business surveys, investigating certain local business practices and how owners select locations.

Lisa Slaba (via Zoom), Military and Project Mining Manager at FEDC – L. Slaba shared that in August the FEDC hosted the third Alaska Defense Forum, which saw over half of the participants coming from outside the borough. She added that around \$60,000 in sponsorships was generated from the event. She stated that last month the FEDC held a military resources and job fair, and Fort Wainwright has shared that as a result, 14 job offers have been extended. She stated they continue to move forward with other projects and branch out in economic development capacities.

Nick Clark – N. Clark spoke in support of Resolution No. 5083, particularly item 10, which relates to improving the Public Employee Retirement System (PERS) retirement system. As a member of the Fairbanks Fire Department (FFD), he shared some facts about those who are part of the Tier 4 system. He stated that 90% of fire suppression personnel at FFD are in Tier 4, and their average longevity with the City is three years. He stated that 70% of the department has under five years' experience. He explained there is a drastic loss of institutional knowledge when people leave the department, and he added that there are only about six Tier 3 employees left. He stated that the FFD is wonderful and takes pride in serving the community, but they need to replace institutional knowledge. N. Clark expressed appreciation that the resolution references retention problems. He indicated that the FFD's staffing challenges are not related to the current national labor shortages, nor are they a consequence of COVID-19. He stated that the shortage began with the inception of Tier 4 in 2007. He stated he hopes the legislature can fix the Tier 4 problems.

**Mayor Pruhs**, hearing no requests for additional comments, declared Citizen's Comments closed.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA**

**Mr. Ringstad**, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to APPROVE the Agenda and Consent Agenda.

**Ms. Sprinkle** pulled Resolution No. 5084, item 12(b) of New Business, from the Consent Agenda.

**Mr. Cleworth** pulled Resolution No. 5083, New Business item 12(a), 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.

**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
5734	The Bakery Restaurant	Beverage Dispensary – Duplicate	The Bakery Restaurant, Inc.	44 College Road, Suite A

**Mr. Marney**, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to WAIVE PROTEST on the liquor license application for renewal.

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

**Ms. Rogers** stated she wished the owners were present as the Council considered the application. In reviewing the dispatch report, she assumed they were having challenges with their alarm system.

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

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

NAYS: None

**Mayor Pruhs** declared the MOTION CARRIED.

**MAYOR'S COMMENTS AND REPORT**

**Mayor Pruhs** addressed the extremely racist and anti-Semitic views expressed via Zoom during at the last last meeting. He stated that the comments do not reflect the views, beliefs, or practices of the City of Fairbanks, its elected officials, or its employees. He stated that the City does not condone the comments or wish to promulgate any of the beliefs expressed by the commenters. He shared that since that meeting, he has met with staff to discuss ways to safeguard the public process and improve the efficiency of meetings. He stated that public participation in City Council

meetings is vital to the mission of the City, and he will continue to do his best to make citizens feel welcomed, valued, and respected.

**Mayor Pruhs** asked City Engineer Bob Pristash to address the lighting at the intersection of the Old Steese Highway and Trainor Gate Road. R. Pristash confirmed that the intersection is under the jurisdiction of the City, and he explained that reconstruction is planned for next summer, which will include the replacement of those lights. He stated that burnt out bulbs will be replaced and that he will drive past the intersection on his way home to verify the status. He stated that he could initiate a work order the following day. **Mayor Pruhs** thanked V. Buberger for raising the issue.

### **COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS**

**Ms. Sprinkle** stated she was pleased to hear that the Mayor had already given approval to the Public Works Director to initiate snow removal procedures as quickly as needed.

**Ms. Rogers** welcomed Mr. Marney and Mr. Ringstad as they begin their new terms.

**Mr. Cleworth** shared similar sentiments and stated that he has enjoyed working with both of them.

**Ms. Tidwell** echoed the welcome back to both Councilmembers and thanked everyone in the community who voted. She stated she feels that participation in local elections is very important.

**Mr. Marney** stated he is sending thoughts and prayers to Israel as the country experiences the tragic attacks that began over the weekend.

**Mr. Ringstad** stated that he had no comments.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- a) Ordinance No. 6263 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Section 2-119, Order of Business. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs and Council Members Cleworth, Marney, and Rogers. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

**Mr. Cleworth**, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6263.

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

**Mr. Marney**, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6263 by substituting the amended, proposed version.

**Mayor Pruhs** called for objection and, hearing none, declared the MOTION CARRIED.

**Mr. Cleworth** addressed page two, item five, which revised the time limit of Citizens' Comments to 30 minutes rather than a 7:30 p.m. cutoff. He stated it is implied that the time limit will be in effect unless otherwise extended by a majority vote of the Council, but he would like to have specific language included.

**Mr. Cleworth**, seconded by **Ms. Rogers**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6263, by adding “unless extended by a Council vote.” to the end of Sec. 2-119(a)(5).

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND SEC. 2-119(a)(5) OF ORDINANCE NO. 6263, AS AMENDED, BY ADDING “UNLESS EXTENDED BY A COUNCIL VOTE” AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

**Mayor Pruhs** declared the MOTION CARRIED.

**Ms. Sprinkle** asked for justification of the added language that would require Citizens’ Comments to pertain to matters “which concerns the City’s business or over which the Council has control.”

**Mayor Pruhs** indicated that this is to prevent incidents such as what occurred at the last meeting where comments that had nothing to do with the City or the Council ate up time during a limited comment period. He stated that other municipalities have similar parameters in place.

**Ms. Sprinkle**, seconded by **Ms. Rogers**, moved to ADVANCE Ordinance No. 6263, as Amended, to the next regular meeting to allow for another public hearing.

**Mr. Cleworth** inquired as to the purpose of postponing versus adopting. City Attorney Chard explained that the amended version, with the revision to the Citizens’ Comment period, is a significant change from the original ordinance. He stated it would be prudent to allow for another public hearing, as the changes will impact how the public participates in future meetings.

Clerk Snider asked to confirm that the original sponsors of the ordinance wished to remain as sponsors on the amended version, to which they each consented.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADVANCE ORDINANCE NO. 6263, AS AMENDED, TO THE NEXT REGULAR MEETING TO ALLOW FOR ANOTHER PUBLIC HEARING AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

**Mayor Pruhs** declared the MOTION CARRIED.

- b) Ordinance No. 6264 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Section 74-152 by Increasing the Tobacco Excise Tax. Introduced by Council Members Marney and Sprinkle. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

**Ms. Sprinkle**, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6264.

**Mayor Pruhs** called for Public Testimony.

Alyssa Keill – A. Keill spoke in support of Ordinance No. 6264 and stated that the use of tobacco and nicotine products is prevalent in local schools. She stated she works with youth as a swim coach and has had many stories shared with her about widespread use by students. She stated that

it is challenging for those who want to stay far away from it. A. Keill stated that she works full-time in the public health sector. She stated that earlier in the day she emailed the Council and included a photo showing all the vaping products confiscated at a single high school in the first 3 weeks of the school year from just two boys' restrooms. She remarked that the photo represents only the devices that were identified and confiscated, and one can only guess how many more are out there. She stated she works with young people every day and is very grateful that the Council is considering making access to addictive, harmful products more difficult for youth.

**Ms. Sprinkle** stated that much of the information provided is new to her. She stated that the cost of vaping devices seems expensive, and she wondered how kids as young as grades 4 and 5 are getting them. A. Keill responded that there is a lot of speculation and incomplete data about that question. She stated that what they hear most is that kids often get them from their parents, older siblings, or other family members. She stated that in high schools, it is not uncommon for one student to acquire a vape and then share it with their friends. She shared that she has also heard of teens obtaining a device, marking up the price, and selling it to other teens.

**Ms. Rogers** asked A. Keill if she could explain the amount of tobacco within vapes as compared to cigarettes. A. Keill explained that, from her understanding, a standard disposable vape cartridge contains around twice as much nicotine as a pack of cigarettes. She stated that is for the smallest vapes, and the ones in her photo were almost triple that size.

Alex McDonald – A. McDonald shared that he owns the vape shop across from City Hall and is happy to answer any questions. He stated he was a smoker for 19 years, including 10 years after losing his grandmother to lung cancer. He stated he tried all the traditional approaches to quitting smoking, but nothing worked for him until his mother gave him his first starter kit. He shared that he was smoke-free within two weeks, and this winter will mark 10 years of being smoke-free. He stated that vape products help people quit smoking, and they are not marketed to children. A. McDonald stated that his social media page is age-restricted so that youth cannot view it; he stated he believes his goals are the same as the Council's. He explained that he cards everyone who makes a purchase, that he wants to keep products out of kids' hands, and that he wants to help people quit smoking. He stated that the perception of vaping products is starting to change, and health officials say that those using both tobacco and vapor products should shift to exclusively using vapes to quit smoking. He reference an article he emailed to the Council earlier in the day about the effects of taxes on vape products based on experiences in Minnesota, one of the first states to tax those products. He reported that over 32,000 residents of that state responded that they did not stop smoking after taxes were increased. He stated that more and more, people are reporting that switching to vaping is the most successful way to quit smoking after all other efforts have failed, and doctors are even suggesting it as an alternative to cigarettes. He commented that it does not help to tax something that is working to fight against the leading cause of lung cancer.

**Ms. Sprinkle** asked if she would be able to adjust the intensity of the nicotine being consumed from a vape pen or if she would have to buy a certain product with lower levels, similar to cigarette choices. A. McDonald explained that it depends on the device. He displayed a device that had an adjustable setting to control the amount of vapor and stated that e-liquids come in different strengths. He stated he has reduced his personal consumption from 12 mg. to 3 mg. since making the switch from cigarettes and stated that it is customizable. He stated that in his experience, most people reduce the nicotine strength in their refill cartridges over time. **Ms. Sprinkle** commented

that those people are still smoking. A. McDonald clarified there is no combustion or smoke; rather, it is vapor, just like a fog machine or even an asthmatic inhaler. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked about the nicotine aspect of vape products. A. McDonald explained that there is nicotine in the product, but combustion is what kills people. He stated that if people smoked coffee beans or tea leaves, that would also lead to lung cancer, but that is not an issue with consuming liquids. He stated that while harm reduction is a big part of public health, they cannot change everyone's behaviors, but they can help people make better choices by providing options. He called attention to programs that provide free, clean needles to those using illegal drugs, to at least cutdown on transmission of diseases via used, dirty needles, similar to clinics giving away condoms to combat the spread of STDs. He stated that smokers need safe alternatives to combustible products.

**Mr. Cleworth** thanked A. McDonald for his emails. He asked A. McDonald whether he buys a cartridge for the vape he just displayed. A. McDonald stated he does not. He explained that it is a bottle of liquid, which works with an open system and can be refilled. He added that there are other single-use and disposable products. **Mr. Cleworth** asked what the equivalent level of cigarettes would be to A. McDonald's liquid container, as well as a cost comparison. A. McDonald stated that he used to smoke about a pack a day, but the bottle for his device would last him four to five days. He stated that a device with a standard glass tank costs about \$105, the add-on dripper tank he uses costs \$35, and the two batteries it requires are \$10 each. **Mr. Cleworth** asked A. McDonald if he sells cigarettes. A. McDonald replied that he does not carry any tobacco products. He stated the nicotine in the items he sells is the same as what is found in smoking cessation products.

**Ms. Tidwell** acknowledged A. McDonald's statements about vaping being a safer alternative to smoking but asked if he believed vaping itself was healthy. A. McDonald stated that while nothing is completely healthy, it is 95% safer than smoking. He referenced published studies about cancer markers from health professionals, which he stated he has shared with the Council.

**Ms. Sprinkle** asked A. McDonald if he sells any of the items that look like other materials, such as highlighter vape pens, or if he knows where those items can be purchased. A. McDonald replied that he does not sell those items and is not even sure where one could buy them locally. He stated that no responsible shop owner would carry such items. He stated they do not want kids to vape and hope that those who do are held accountable. He stated that in the last legislative session, a senate bill only went halfway on an effort to combat underage usage. He explained that it removed consequences for parents who provide products to children, so now if a kid says they got the product through their parents, authorities cannot do anything. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked if those types of items are available online. A. McDonald discussed the PACT Act, which was expanded years ago to include vapor products. He explained that its purpose was to stop mail-based cigarette purchases. He stated he has heard some people bypass that by ordering overseas but pointed out that congressional leaders exempted Alaska and Hawaii from in-state shipping restrictions. He stated that allows him to ship orders to rural, remote customers, and it permits anyone to order from other retailers within Alaska.

**Mr. Cleworth** asked whether he could order a carton of cigarettes from Indian country for around \$10. A. McDonald indicated that he cannot really speak much to that but that he recalls in college purchasing no-name brand cigarettes for much lower prices. He stated those same places sell vape products now also. He stated that in New York, where taxes on tobacco and vape products were raised, it is estimated that 60% of purchases now occur either through casinos, the black market,

or through other non-taxed transactions. **Mr. Cleworth** asked A. McDonald if he could order from another source if he wanted to avoid purchasing products from him. A. McDonald confirmed that he could and that Kenai does not have any taxes. He stated that would allow anyone the opportunity to avoid having to purchase higher taxed products locally.

**Mr. Marney** thanked A. McDonald for the opportunity to meet with him earlier in the day. He asked A. McDonald if his business could survive a 20% tax increase. A. McDonald indicated that he is not sure, because he has never faced this before. He stated he believes that with the current state of the economy, people are trying to cut costs wherever they can. He explained that one of the main ingredients in e-liquids is vegetable glycerin, which is easy to make, and large bottles with stronger nicotine levels are available to buy. He stated that some people would likely buy those, dilute the liquid, and make their own vegetable glycerin. **Mr. Marney** stated that A. McDonald runs a very reputable business and that he appreciates that he came to testify.

**Mr. Ringstad** asked whether reservations in the Lower 48 can ship to customers in Alaska. A. McDonald indicated that he is not sure how it works in those locations, since they have special rules. He stated that congress prohibited any direct shipping to customers with the exception of in-state shipments within Hawaii and Alaska.

**Mayor Pruhs** asked A. McDonald if he believes the tax increase will decrease his sales. A. McDonald stated he is sure it will, but he is more concerned with other unintended consequences. He stated that if a tax needs to be raised, it should be on truly harmful products like cigarettes, which kill half of its consumers when used as intended.

**Ms. Rogers** thanked A. McDonald for attending and asked about the presence of metals in vape products. A. McDonald explained that there are lesser levels present in vape products than in cigarettes. He stated that when used properly, there is minimal concern with the toxins in vapes. He stated a lot of studies have been retracted due to impractical or inaccurate testing parameters, and every harmful aspect identified in vapes is astronomically worse in cigarettes. **Ms. Rogers** spoke to the issue of underage usage. She wondered how the issue could be discussed in two separate frames: adult smokers who need safer alternatives and youth getting their hands on products not intended for them. She wondered why products are made to be so easily concealable. A. McDonald repeated that no one is saying that minors should vape. He stated that about 30% of his peers smoked when he graduated 25 years ago, and it is single digits now, as people are not using deadly products like they used to. **Ms. Rogers** spoke more on the issue of underage usage. **Mayor Pruhs** gave a reminder that the Council is to only ask questions of individuals testifying. **Ms. Rogers** thanked A. McDonald for his efforts to enforce age restrictions on purchases and asked if he agrees they have a responsibility to act upon concerns present in the community. A. McDonald stated that if someone is breaking the law, they should be held accountable. He stated that taxing law-abiding adults does nothing to solve the problem. He stated that young people are not getting vape products from retailers, and if a retailer does sell to kids, they get shut down.

**Mr. Ringstad** asked if all regulations for tobacco are the same for vape products. A. McDonald stated that they are. **Mr. Ringstad** asked if there is a way to make enforcement more effective. A. McDonald referenced the legislative effort that failed to implement meaningful consequences for parents who allow their children access to vaping products. He stated that if that loophole was closed or made tighter, it might make it easier to hold minors accountable. He stated there needs



to be accountability, and that should be on the parents. He suggested that community service could be a consequence because money does not seem to be a deterrent for underage users.

**Mr. Cleworth** noted that Anchorage has a wholesale tax of 55% and Fairbanks is at 8% for consumable products. He asked if there are also cartridges included in this consideration. A. McDonald explained that for disposable devices, the entire item is taxed, but for an open system like his, only the liquid refill containers are taxed. He commented that people stock up before heading to Anchorage to avoid the much higher prices. He stated that a Soldotna store owner shared with him that he gets 10-15 customers each week from Anchorage who are stocking up.

**Ms. Sprinkle** asked A. McDonald if he has seen that taxes statewide are far higher than what the Council is proposing. A. McDonald confirmed he has but stated the Council is still proposing to tax items that people use to quit smoking.

**Ms. Rogers** asked A. McDonald if he thought there would be a certain percentage of people who would still switch. A. McDonald stated that there likely would be, but studies have shown that increasing the cost of cigarettes increased the chance that more people move to quit or switch. He stated that the goal of public health should be to get individuals away from products that kill them.

**Mayor Pruhs** asked A. McDonald if he believed the increased tax would result in more online ordering. A. McDonald stated that he believes it would and that it would also result in higher crime rates. He referenced testimony from a researcher that illustrated an increase in “smash and grab” robberies and black market sales.

Jessi Walton – J. Walton stated that she is the spouse of A. McDonald and showed some of her personal vaping devices. She stated her daughter has obtained lower-end products that are sold at gas stations, but she has no idea who purchased them for her. She stated she smoked for 13 years but quit 10 years ago, and she can feel the difference in her body.

Tim Lamkin – T. Lamkin shared that he was calling from Juneau and has 25 years of experience in the legislature there, particularly in policies and regulations dealing with vaping and e-cigarette products. He stated that he respectfully disagrees with A. McDonald and that he supports Ordinance No. 6264. He stated he believes that a 20% tax is a good start, but it may be low. He pointed out that the average tax across Alaska is currently 39%. He indicated that the bottom line is that it is false advertising to refer to vaping as a safe alternative to cigarettes and a way to help smokers quit. He stated that it is about an addiction to nicotine. He expressed his belief that those opposing the ordinance are speaking through the lens of addiction or are motivated by profit.

**Mayor Pruhs** asked T. Lamkin if he believes that an increase in the tax will cause a decline in sales within the City. T. Lamkin responded that most of the devices being purchased are cheaper units, anywhere from five to twenty dollars and that the increase of a dollar or two is not going to dissuade many people. He stated that Fairbanks has the lowest tax rate on these types of products in the state.

**Ms. Rogers** asked for confirmation that Fairbanks has the lowest tax in the state; she also noted that T. Lamkin called the increase to 20% “a start.” T. Lamkin referenced a spreadsheet from the Alaska Department of Health which showed 17 other communities taxing anywhere from 8% to

90%, and he pointed out that the report is over a year-and-a-half old. He stated that increasing to 20% puts Fairbanks closer to the statewide average.

**Ms. Tidwell** asked T. Lamkin if there is any statewide data which shows a reduction in underage usage in higher-taxed communities. T. Lamkin acknowledged that he has not studied that directly, but he can confidently assert that national data has proven that the single most effective way to prevent initiation, especially for youth, is to make it more expensive by raising taxes.

Jasmine Rios – J. Rios stated that she opposes the ordinance and cannot imagine that sales would not be negatively impacted by a 250% tax increase. She stated that consumers may travel to neighboring communities or purchase online within Alaska to avoid the tax burden. She stated that tobacco products are often purchased alongside gasoline and other items, so it will harm local businesses and reduce tax revenues. She stated that unintended consequences include more black-market dealings.

**Ms. Sprinkle** asked J. Rios if she had stated the tax increase would be 250%. J. Rios asserted that going from 8 to 20 is a 250% increase. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked J. Rios if she was aware that Fairbanks has the lowest tax rate in the state. J. Rios acknowledged that but still opposed the increase.

Hearing no requests for additional comments, **Mayor Pruhs** declared Public Testimony closed.

**Mayor Pruhs** reminded the Council that the original premise of the ordinance did not relate to a social aspect but was an effort to lower property taxes.

**Ms. Sprinkle** asked when the last time the tax rate had been visited. Chief Financial Officer Bell stated that in July 2021 the Council added vaping products to the existing tobacco tax parameters, but they did not change the percentage at that time.

**Ms. Rogers** spoke about the ordinance pertaining to lowering property taxes and not to the public health matters individuals testified about. She stated that no one commented about the property tax impact.

With the Council's consent, **Mayor Pruhs** allowed a return to Public Testimony for an individual who had signed up in advance but was unable to unmute when called upon a few minutes prior.

Jamie Morgan, American Heart Association – J. Morgan stated that tobacco is the leading cause of preventable deaths in the state and shared statistics of usage across Alaska. She stated there is consensus among health organizations and the CDC that vapor products are not harmless. She stated those products have negative effects on the heart, lungs, and brain and contain high levels of nicotine. She stated that no e-cigarette has been approved by the FDA for smoking cessation. She stated that claims that vaping is a better alternative for those trying to quit smoking than FDA-approved nicotine replacement products are not backed by science. She stated that most tobacco users report being introduced to smoking prior to age 18, so increasing the cost is a deterrent to price-sensitive teens. She encouraged the Council to pass the ordinance and to amend the definition of tobacco products within the Fairbanks General Code to include e-cigarettes.

**Mayor Pruhs** thanked J. Morgan for her testimony and returned to Council discussion.

**Mr. Marney** shared that he had a very busy day, visiting local schools to speak to administrators about the topic of underage smoking and vaping. He shared that at Ryan Middle School, the principal stated they have a major problem, with about 30% of their 480 students using vapes or e-cigarettes. He stated that when students are caught, they are required to participate in an intervention program, and repeat offenders have a lengthier process. **Mr. Marney** stated that he asked the principal where she thinks students are obtaining the devices, and she believes that either parents are leaving items out and youth are taking them, or that parents are purchasing the items for their kids. He stated that at Lathrop High School, the vice principal confirmed that the problem there is much worse. **Mr. Marney** stated that the Denali Elementary School principal stated that they busted a student for vaping the prior week and that they primarily see the problem in the 4th and 5th grades. He stated that it hurts to think that kids are using vaping products, especially at such a young age. He stated that it is difficult to draw a line between penalizing businesses that are legally allowed to operate, while working to reduce access to and underage usage of these products. He stated that a good start is the increase to 20%. He suggested that they could also speak with the school district regarding policies and see what more can be done.

**Mr. Cleworth** asked about the difference in numbers in the supporting documents between advertised prices in Anchorage, which has a 55% tax rate, and listings on e-Bay. CFO Bell indicated that the numbers shown are per cigarette, but vaping products do not have the same basis. She also noted that some municipalities have tied tax levels to their mill rate, so it adjusts annually.

**Ms. Sprinkle** thanked Mr. Marney for doing the legwork. She confirmed that the ordinance was initially drafted as a help to property owners and that she had no idea vaping was such a problem with youth. She stated she does not believe a tax increase will shut businesses down, as Fairbanks still has the lowest tax in the state. She stated she is not interested in making it easy for kids to access harmful products.

**Mr. Cleworth** recalled discussion in work sessions about increasing the rate beyond the 20% rate recommended by the Finance Committee. He stated that it sounds like everyone is okay with the 20% amount for now. He cautioned increasing the tax too much, because it is easy to beat the system with online purchases. He stated that if they implement the increase and see significant drops in revenue, it will have defeated its purpose. He agreed with Mayor Pruhs about the initial intent but added that it also has the potential to hurt property taxpayers. He stated he is glad there were no amendments. He stated that 20% is a test, and the Council can take input from retailers and the community as a whole.

**Ms. Tidwell** acknowledged the intent of the ordinance as it pertained to property taxes and not public health. She stated she would push for a higher increase if that was not the case. She stated that the culture has changed, and people do not smoke like they used to. She added, however, that kids are vaping because they think it is cool, and they will get addicted to nicotine as a result. She stated she will support the ordinance as written.

**Ms. Rogers** thanked all who spoke. She stated they cannot shut the door on the topic, especially as it pertains to the youth. She spoke to the need to stay involved with the issue and acknowledged that A. McDonald is a person of good character whom they can trust to help find a middle ground.

**Mr. Cleworth** spoke to the social aspect of these types of issues. He stated he went to high school with kids who were alcoholics, despite it being illegal. He stated that if they are looking at eliminating products, they would also have to target junk food and other unhealthy items, as there is a litany of substances that are dangerous. He stated that if products are legal for adults, kids will get their hands on them. He stated that marijuana was a big deal when he was in school in the 1960s and that even when something is made illegal, it does not put a stop to it.

**Ms. Rogers** disagreed with the approach to let sleeping dogs lie and stated she believes they have an obligation to the community to work on problems, especially when it comes to youth. She imagined that everyone knows someone who has died from tobacco use and stated it is heartbreaking.

**Mayor Pruhs** indicated that he will be monitoring the revenue on the tax and if it drops, then what the Council will have done is failed in a social engineering experiment. He discussed the origin of the ordinance and stated that he hopes it works as intended and lowers property taxes.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6264 AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

**Mayor Pruhs** declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6264 ADOPTED.

## NEW BUSINESS

- a) Resolution No. 5083 – A Resolution Stating the City of Fairbanks Legislative and Capital Priorities for 2024. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs and Council Members Marney and Rogers.

**Ms. Sprinkle**, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to APPROVE Resolution No. 5083.

**Mayor Pruhs** indicated that he would like to go through each item, starting with the legislative priorities, to gauge consensus among Councilmembers and determine if items stay or go.

Item No. 1, PERS Contribution Rate – **Mr. Ringstad** expressed interest in having more specific language to imply a possible reduction to the contribution rate for municipalities. **Mr. Cleworth** stated that later in the document, there is a more detailed narrative that may address Mr. Ringstad's concerns. **Mr. Ringstad** and **Ms. Tidwell** agreed that was satisfactory.

Item No. 2, PFOS/PFOA Liability and Funding – There were no suggestions for changes.

Item No. 3, PERS Tiers 1, 2, and 3 – **Ms. Sprinkle** asked if this item was legal. **Mayor Pruhs** explained that it currently is not and that this item was a suggestion from the Chief of Police. He stated the language currently governing this was written in 2006, and those authors would not have envisioned the current staffing challenges in public safety. **Mr. Ringstad** indicated that the concern back then was with allowing retirees to double-dip, which he imagines would still be a concern. He stated he is not sure how the math would work and that he envisions some opposition

from legislators since this is a budgetary matter. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that they will have to explain this from the City's perspective in significant detail.

Item No. 4, SART Funding – There were no suggestions for changes.

Item No. 5, UAF Funding – **Mr. Ringstad**, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to AMEND Resolution No. 5083 by removing the phrase “for the next five years” from Item No. 5.

**Ms. Sprinkle** stated that UAF is a school to be proud of and it should be made a priority for funding. She stated it has been decimated by cuts over the last 8 years to a frightening point.

**Mr. Cleworth** recalled going to school at UAF when there was just a single campus. He stated that back then, concerns were voiced that funding would drop as they began to spread out across the state. He stated that universities cannot be funded in every town across Alaska.

**Mr. Ringstad** stated that his intent is to make it clear that Fairbanks should be the priority for funding for the University of Alaska. He stated that too many senior administrative positions are being relocated, and the status of UAF as the primary campus for the whole system is being diminished. He stated that the jobs should be based in Fairbanks and the focus should be on Fairbanks. He stated that at some point, they must stand up and say “enough!”

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND RESOLUTION NO. 5083 BY REMOVING THE PHRASE “FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS” FROM ITEM NO. 5 AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

**Mayor Pruhs** declared the MOTION CARRIED.

Item No. 6, Crisis Stabilization Services – **Ms. Sprinkle** asked if the item pertained to services rather than a standalone facility. **Mayor Pruhs**, referencing Item No. 2 under the capital priorities, explained that the goal is to encourage the legislature to not only dedicate funds for services but to also commit a specific amount for a new facility under the capital budget.

Item No. 7, First Responder Exposure to Bodily Fluids – There were no suggestions for changes.

Item No. 8, Videos in Response to Public Records Requests – **Mr. Ringstad** asked if state law prohibits charging a fee for video copying or editing in response to a public records request. Attorney Chard explained that there are more and more requests coming through for video recordings, yet there are limitations to what services the City can charge for and the amounts that can be charged. He stated that, as he understands, fulfilling the increased load of public records requests is stripping the capacity of many municipalities, and this priority is one example of how the laws surrounding the requests should be updated. **Mayor Pruhs** noted that he received a budget increase request earlier in the day due to this very issue and added that it is becoming problematic.

Item No. 9, Regional Payment Hubs for Marijuana Cultivation Tax – **Mr. Ringstad** asked if the state administration could take care of this currently. **Mayor Pruhs** clarified that this is something

the administration certainly could do but has refused to do so far. He stated that the City would like its regional representatives to push the issue, and he spoke of the hardship to local marijuana cultivation business owners to drive to Anchorage monthly to make payments. **Ms. Sprinkle** added that the City has tried to bring it to the administration's attention, but it has been ignored.

Item No. 10, PERS Retirement System – **Mr. Cleworth** indicated that he has concerns about the item but believes some rewording would make it satisfactory. He referenced the three-page handout regarding current and proposed retirement plan parameters. He discussed in some depth the history of the debt surrounding the current system.

**Ms. Tidwell** called a point of order and stated that the issues discussed in the handout do not pertain to Item No. 10. **Mayor Pruhs** asked for clarity on how Mr. Cleworth's information would be incorporated. **Mr. Cleworth** indicated that for something as complex and significant as this, providing more information is not a bad thing. He stated he would like to incorporate the handout into Item No. 10, and he read through the narrative in the handout, which included history of debt and contributions into PERS/TRS, perspective on potential other uses of funds at the time, as well as an analysis, including concerns and suggested alternative options, of current proposals the legislature is considering. He stated he believes legislators needs to hear the information.

**Mr. Cleworth**, seconded by **Ms. Rogers**, moved to AMEND Resolution No. 5083, as Amended, by incorporating the three-page handout into the summary attachment.

**Ms. Tidwell** stated that she is not in favor of the motion. She stated that the Council heard an organization in a recent work session report making 8.27% over the last 20 years and that this is not the only plan out there. She stated that the current language in Item No. 10 is very open and conveys a need to work on the retirement system to fix what is offered. She stated she does not believe the intention is to refer to specific ideas or proposals. **Mr. Cleworth** asked Ms. Tidwell about her thoughts on fiscal certainty. **Ms. Tidwell** explained that she was unable to attend the recent meeting about retirement plans and is unsure what bills will come in the next session. She stated that when a fiscally responsible defined benefit plan comes forward, that is what should be considered. She added that those types of benefits are what keep people from leaving jobs. **Mr. Cleworth** asked Ms. Tidwell if she would still be in favor of a defined benefit program that would put City of Fairbanks taxpayers at risk. He described the history of such plans and their negative, albeit unintentional, consequences. **Ms. Tidwell** stated that she does not want a plan that would harm the City, but at some point, a plan will be brought forward that will not cause harm. She stated she believes that is exactly what Item No. 10 currently conveys. She stated that every short-staffed department has asked for this and has identified it as a contributing factor to the retention crisis. She stated she does not think the extra material needs to be added to the legislative priorities. **Mr. Cleworth** responded that he also heard those numbers and that 8.27% put the state tens of billions of dollars in the hole, and it was not sustainable. He explained that those who were in favor at the time said to let it go longer because it would work its way out, but it got worse. He stated that a major economic downturn would put them in a world of hurt, and the taxpayers are the ones who would pay that promised benefit. He stated that if the State wants to make those kinds of commitments again, then the State needs to indemnify the City and account for those funds separately. He stated that if the bill that was proposed in Juneau three years ago had gone through, it would have been in the red by now, and the City would already have been hit with that liability. He stated he does not want City taxpayers to pay for a mismanaged retirement fund. He indicated

that he wants to know what kind of changes can be implemented to prevent such a disaster, and that is the nature of his recommendations in the handout. He stated he believes the Council should be more precise, rather than broad, in stating the City's priorities.

**Mr. Marney** spoke to the reality that every conversation on this topic is going to have more than one perspective. He stated he is confident that the unions have already made their voices heard. He stated that the proposed amendment adds to the conversation.

**Ms. Sprinkle** stated that the numbers are certainly spooky, but she is not sure if they need the full narrative as proposed. She stated she thought the purpose of the meeting with the Interior Delegation was to have a conversation, rather than just handing over a piece of paper.

**Mr. Cleworth** indicated that if they ignore everything else he has drafted, he hopes to at least see an emphasis on the statement: *"The City of Fairbanks requests that this new Tier 5 system be monitored with separate accounting and will not be added to the legacy debt with all new debt incurred covered by the State of Alaska and indemnify the municipalities."* He stated that if the State comes up with a system that they claim works, they need to indemnify the City. He stated that the Council has no control over the investment and should not be liable for its mismanagement.

**Mr. Ringstad** shared that he has had the displeasure of sitting through many hours of discussion as the state shifted from Tier 1 to Tier 2 to Tier 3, etc. He stated that the problem is having an unfunded program with the City making up the losses. He stated that someone else may say that 22% meets their definition of fiscal certainty for a municipality, but that percentage is subjective. He stated that it was a mistake to trust the State to manage this and that the Council should put forth language that makes it clear: municipalities need to be held harmless. He stated that a lot of retirement funds are sucking wind right now, and they need to be loud if they want to protect the City. He stated the City does not have a huge tax base and should be specific in its communication.

**Mayor Pruhs** stated that the Council will meet with the Interior Delegation before the next council meeting. He stated there is not time to rework the resolution, but the Council will have an opportunity to speak with the legislators. He stated that any changes need to happen at this meeting.

**Ms. Rogers** stated that she realizes their conversation with the delegation will not be word for word with the handout, but she agrees it is useful background information which they can supply.

**Mayor Pruhs** added that he realizes there are varying opinions and ideas about PERS/TRS among the Council. He stated that the task is to have something unified to present, but that ultimately all six Councilmembers can share their ideas with the Interior Delegation.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND RESOLUTION NO. 5083, AS AMENDED, BY INCORPORATING THE THREE-PAGE HANDOUT INTO THE SUMMARY ATTACHMENT AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Rogers, Ringstad, Marney, Sprinkle, Cleworth

NAYS: Tidwell

**Mayor Pruhs** declared the MOTION CARRIED.

**Mayor Pruhs** continued with 2024 capital priorities.

Item No. 1, Public Works Generator – There were no suggestions for changes.

Item No. 2, Interior Alaska Regional Crisis Stabilization Center – **Ms. Sprinkle**, seconded by **Ms. Rogers**, moved to AMEND Resolution No. 5083, as Amended, by swapping the order of Items 1 and 2.

**Mr. Ringstad** asked, as far as priority ranking, how important the Public Works generator was. **Mayor Pruhs** explained that the request for funds to replace the generator would be money dedicated to the City of Fairbanks, and funds for the proposed Crisis Stabilization Center would not be for the City but for that facility. He stated that his priorities are ranked how they appear currently. **Mr. Ringstad** repeated his question, asking how badly the generator is needed. **Mr. Cleworth** stated that in a crisis, they need that generator, and it should be number one.

**Ms. Sprinkle** asked if she is correct in recalling that the City had a generator somewhere in its own capital budget. **Mayor Pruhs** confirmed that there was. **Ms. Sprinkle** wondered if those who receive the request would be more inclined to consider items that serve the entire region rather than just the city. **Mayor Pruhs** reminded the Council that in the prior year the City received \$3MM, so they should not expect much in 2024.

**Mr. Marney** noted that there is already a stabilization center in Anchorage and another in Juneau, and the goal is to get one in the Interior. **Mayor Pruhs** added that earlier in the day he was in a meeting with the Police Department and the Rescue Mission, and they all agreed that this is a high priority. He stated that it solves a lot of problems for many people, but his ranking is based on what he thinks the City can get.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND RESOLUTION NO. 5083, AS AMENDED, BY SWAPPING THE ORDER OF ITEMS 1 AND 2 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Sprinkle, Tidwell, Marney, Rogers

NAYS: Cleworth, Ringstad

**Mayor Pruhs** declared the MOTION CARRIED.

Item No. 3, Island Homes – **Mayor Pruhs** indicated that the Island Homes subdivision is not the only area the City is looking to address with the request, but they will see what they can get. He stated that the last time the roads and sidewalks in that area had a major update was 1964.

**Mr. Ringstad** stated that after the Council's last discussion on the topic, he spoke with some residents of that area. He stated one of them knew a lot about the matter, while another admitted knowing nothing. He stated that the City will need to communicate heavily with the residents of the neighborhood if something comes of the item.

**Mayor Pruhs** called for any additional discussion on Resolution No. 5083, as Amended.

**Mr. Ringstad** asked if the resolution was intended to serve as the City's priorities for both state and federal lawmakers. **Mayor Pruhs** indicated that he has not yet put together thoughts for the



federal side of things. He indicated that there is not have enough information available yet, but a separate resolution will be drafted for that purpose, to include items pertaining to the fire station.

**Ms. Sprinkle** stated that she would like the State to reconsider aspects of the Manh Choh Mine project and asked if it was too late to include something in Resolution No. 5083. **Mayor Pruhs** reminded Ms. Sprinkle that the resolution is open for discussion and amendments.

**Mr. Ringstad** asked what else the Council could say about the Manh Choh Mine project, considering that all permits had already been reviewed and issued. **Ms. Tidwell** referenced the resolution the Council already passed [Resolution No. 5021, approved January 9, 2023]. She stated that the Council could make reference to that resolution, but it would not make sense to include a more narrative on the topic and potentially show a conflict in priorities. **Mr. Marney** stated that he believes legislators have already been heavily pressured about the Manh Choh Mine issue.

**Mr. Cleworth** suggested that Ms. Sprinkle could share her thoughts at the meeting with the Interior Delegation, along with a copy of approved Resolution No. 5021. He stated that will be the Council's opportunity to speak with the Interior Delegation on any topic they want. **Ms. Sprinkle** thanked the Mayor and concurred that it may be best to collect thoughts between now and then.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION NO. 5083, AS AMENDED, AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

**Mayor Pruhs** declared the MOTION CARRIED and Resolution No. 5083, as Amended, APPROVED.

**Ms. Rogers** thanked Mayor Pruhs and stated that in all her years serving on the Council, this is the most time and attention the Council has given to the legislative and capital priorities process. **Mayor Pruhs** recalled that the prior year they had only one meeting on the issue, and he does not want to approach it that way again. He stated that the item is worth spending time on.

- b) Resolution No. 5084 – A Resolution in Support of Continuing to Hold Local Elections in Early October. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs and Council Members Cleworth, Rogers, Marney, and Ringstad.

**Ms. Sprinkle**, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to APPROVE Resolution No. 5084.

**Ms. Sprinkle** and **Ms. Tidwell** both requested to be added as sponsors to the resolution.

**Mr. Cleworth** noted that changing the City's fiscal year would require a vote of the citizens as it is imbedded in the City Charter. He added that it has been attempted once before, but it did not pass. He stated that if the Borough proceeds with moving its election to November, the City will have to make a choice: either join them or keep City elections in early October. He added that both options have an impact and financial burden. He stated that one difficulty he sees is that in a mayoral election year, there is the potential to have a new mayor and two new councilmembers who, upon taking office, would be presented with a budget they had little or no input on. He stated

that at the end of their terms, they would have much involvement in a budget they may not be there for. He stated that amending the Charter to change the City's fiscal year would take another year.

**Ms. Sprinkle** stated that changing the election date is a bad idea. She stated that local politics do not have to align with national politics, and she appreciates seeing things on the ground and non-partisan. She indicated that the change would also take the oxygen out of the room during campaign season, as more people fight for airtime, printing services, etc.

**Mr. Cleworth** stated that he agrees with Ms. Sprinkle but added that a frequent question he receives is why citizens have to vote two times, close together. **Ms. Sprinkle** responded that if the date changed, citizens would still have to vote twice but on the same day; she stated they will have to stand in two lines and receive potentially up to three different ballots and instructions.

**Mayor Pruhs** mentioned having a framed copy of an advertisement for the October 1952 local election when his father ran for Mayor. He pointed out that the October timeframe has been in place since before Alaska was a state. He stated that the Council has historically been more non-partisan than other local government bodies and that switching to a November election will result in local candidates being drowned out with all the other noise. He stated that whether folks like the outcome of the election or not, candidates are heard in the October election.

**Mr. Marney** stated that Clerk Snider researched and shared with him that the City election moved from April to October in 1949. He mentioned that he and Mr. Ringstad, during their campaign season which just concluded, were not invited to about half of the candidate forums that involved candidates for other elections, such as the Borough Assembly and School Board.

**Mr. Ringstad** mentioned that he will attend the next Assembly meeting, and he believes these are important items to bring up. **Mr. Marney** suggested that all Councilmembers show up.

**Ms. Rogers** agreed. She also stated that one very positive aspect of the current election process is the excellent collaboration between the three local clerk's offices. She indicated she would hate to see that cohesion and efficiency lost by splitting up the elections.

**Ms. Sprinkle** shared that, as she understands it, Borough Clerk April Trickey is not in favor of the change, which speaks volumes. She questioned whether it would be okay for the entire Council to attend [the Assembly meeting]. Clerk Snider explained that it is a public meeting which has been noticed to citizens by the Borough. She stated that if the Council acts on Resolution No. 5084, it would not be inappropriate for Councilmembers to speak about it. **Mayor Pruhs** asked to confirm if the Council would be breaking any rules, and he was informed that the Council would be in compliance. **Ms. Rogers** added that they would all go as individuals, not as a body. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked if it was known how the North Pole City Clerk felt about the potential change. Clerk Snider stated that clerks may not take a formal position on the issue; she stated, however, that they have concerns about the effect it would have on budgets, collaboration, voter turnout, and a variety of issues relating to elections. She indicated that there are pros and cons to each side of the issue. She stated she is not comfortable saying that the clerks are for or against the change, but all the concerns and impacts should be shared with the decisionmakers in order for them to make a fully informed decision. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked if they knew if the representative from North Pole would be at the Assembly meeting and suggested that Mr. Ringstad reach out in advance.

**Ms. Tidwell** asked if it would be inappropriate for Councilmembers to speak during public testimony at the Assembly meeting. Attorney Chard explained that the Council may attend and speak on the matter but cautioned them not to huddle together as a group, before or after the meeting, nor speak to one another on other topics.

**Ms. Rogers** reminded the Council that they have had the pleasure of having members of the Assembly attend Council meetings to speak on various items, and it would be nice for Councilmembers to do the same.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION NO. 5084 AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

**Mayor Pruhs** declared the MOTION CARRIED and Resolution No. 5084 APPROVED.

- c) Resolution No. 5085 – A Resolution Authorizing the City of Fairbanks to Accept the Healthy and Equitable Communities Grant. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA.

- d) Resolution No. 5086 – A Resolution Supporting FNSB Ordinance No. 2023-60, an Ordinance Amending FNSBC Title 4 to Delegate Certain Board of Adjustment Duties to the City of Fairbanks and to the City of North Pole and Amending FNSBC Title 4 Regarding Appointments to the Planning Commission. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs and Council Members Cleworth and Rogers.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA.

### **DISCUSSION ITEMS (Information and Reports)**

**Mr. Marney** shared that on September 27, he attended the Explore Fairbanks Board of Directors meeting. He stated they primarily discussed budget items and room tax revenue increases.

**Ms. Tidwell** reported that the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) met the prior week to discuss the Steese Highway Corridor Study, and they are developing recommendations for changes. She stated they have a few more meetings planned, and something should be published soon which outlines their concerns and suggestions for changes to existing and future plans.

**Mayor Pruhs** shared that the recent Polaris Working Group meeting was productive, and they found a funding source that a developer could use for a viable project. He stated that they are recruiting potential tenants for a future development plan, and they are also communicating with adjacent property owners to see if there is interest in selling properties in order to pursue a full-block development. He stated that the upcoming meeting has been cancelled, as not much has changed since they last met, but they will meet monthly going forward. He stated that the first goal is to find groups interested in the space so they can put together numbers for a future developer.

All other Councilmembers indicated that they had no reports.

### **WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TO THE CITY COUNCIL**

- a) Historic Preservation Commission Meeting Minutes of April 4, 2023

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA.

- b) Recommendation for Appointment to the FNSB Planning Commission

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA.

### **COUNCILMEMBER COMMENTS**

**Ms. Sprinkle** shared that Mayor Pruhs invited her, Mr. Cleworth, and a few department heads to meet and discuss details of the recently published Fairbanks Downtown Plan (FDP). She stated that the meeting was productive, and they have a consensus moving forward. She stated that they eliminated some items, and they have a good response to provide to the Borough.

**Mr. Ringstad** and **Mr. Marney** each stated that they had no further comments.

**Ms. Tidwell** stated she was glad to hear that a meeting regarding the FDP had taken place and that she looked forward to working on a Resolution in support of the FDP. She shared that she recently noticed on Facebook that individuals can sign up for an FPD text alert service.

**Mayor Pruhs** informed the Council that City Engineer Bob Pristash had taken notes during the meeting Ms. Sprinkle mentioned and stated that he will share them with the Council.

**Mr. Cleworth** stated that there are a lot of ideas on urban planning, some of which are radical and easy to dismiss as not being suitable for the City. He shared that Houston, Texas has no zoning, but most would agree that they would not want that for Fairbanks. He stated, however, that it is good to be aware of different ideas and viewpoints. He shared a video clip of a heavily trafficked five-way interchange in Hanoi, Vietnam with no traffic signals and pointed out that pedestrians were also meandering through the intersection. He stated he finds it amazing that no one gets hit. He shared another video clip from Ethiopia showing similarly free traffic and pedestrian flows. He stated that his daughter lives in Spokane, WA in a newer area which, upon development, did not install some of the typical signage at intersections, but to the surprise of many, it works and people yield when appropriate. **Mr. Cleworth** stated that when it comes to making plans for things like bike paths, some argue that dedicated lanes and signage is needed, but he disagrees. **Mayor Pruhs** asked Mr. Cleworth if he was implying that he would like to see zoning powers taken away from the Borough. **Mr. Cleworth** chuckled and clarified that he was not; he stated he just wants everyone to remember that the way they think things must be done is rarely the only way. He stated that many communities implement different strategies and think outside of the box for solutions that work for them. **Mr. Cleworth** expressed gratitude to the Clay Street Cemetery Commission for the work its members are doing and applauded Chair Aldean Kilbourn for her incredible efforts. He asked if there was a budget work session schedule. Clerk Snider confirmed that CFO Bell has finalized the dates, and she will send the information to the Council.

**Ms. Rogers** stated that when situations are noticed in the community that border on gentrification, they need to maintain the flavor of Fairbanks in a way that allows people to be themselves.

### **CITY CLERK'S REPORT**

Clerk Snider shared that the final ballot count would take place the following afternoon at the Borough Assembly Chambers.

### **CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT**

Attorney Chard stated that he had no report.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSIONS**

**Ms. Rogers**, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to ENTER an Executive Session to discuss Legal Department Personnel.

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

**Mayor Pruhs** called for a brief recess, after which the Council reconvened in Executive Session.

a) Legal Department Personnel (*entered at 9:20 p.m.*)

The City Council met in Executive Session to discuss the above item. No action was taken. The regular meeting resumed at 9:30 p.m.

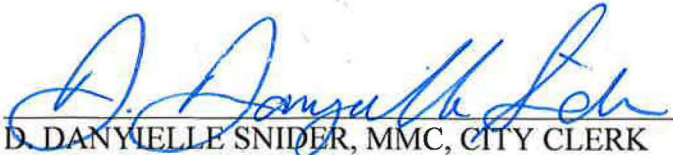
### **ADJOURNMENT**

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

Hearing no objection, **Mayor Pruhs** declared the meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
DAVID PRUHS, MAYOR

ATTEST:

  
D. DANYELLE SNIDER, MMC, CITY CLERK

Transcribed by: CC