



FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, DECEMBER 11, 2023
FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
800 CUSHMAN STREET, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

The City Council convened at 6:30 p.m. on the above date, 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
 Michael Sanders, Chief of Staff
 Thomas Chard, City Attorney
 Margarita Bell, Chief Financial Officer (remotely)
 Ron Dupee, Police Chief (remotely)
 Andrew Coccaro, Fire Chief
 Kristi Merideth, Dispatch Manager (remotely)
 Robert Pristash, City Engineer
 Clem Clooten, Building Official
 Jeremiah Cotter, Street Foreman
 Brynn Butler, Housing Coordinator
 Brenda McFarlane, Crisis Now Coordinator (remotely)

INVOCATION

The invocation was given by City Clerk Danyielle Snider.

FLAG SALUTATION

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

CEREMONIAL MATTERS (Proclamations, Introductions, Recognitions, Awards)

a) Fairbanks Fire Chief Oath of Office

Clerk Snider administered the Oath of Office for newly appointed Fire Chief Andrew Coccaro.

b) Reading of the Bill of Rights

Mayor Pruhs introduced the following students from West Valley High School's Government Class and ROTC to read the Bill of Rights into the record: Shirley Hornbuckle, Aurora Brant, Tyler Teslow, Symone Bailey, Nikki Farkas, Ronja Wagner, Kaylee Roberts, Victoria Moore, Sarah Dallaire, Amy Roberts, Alyssa Roberts, and Joey Dallaire.

Ms. Rogers thanked the students for coming and invited them to return. **Mayor Pruhs** echoed his appreciation and spoke to the importance of local government.

At 6:41 p.m., **Mayor Pruhs** called for a brief recess to enjoy light refreshments. The meeting resumed at 6:52 p.m.

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.]

Victor Buberger – V. Buberger stated that he believes Frank Turney would be pleased to see the tradition of reading the Bill of Rights carried on. He spoke about streetlights that were still not working on the east side of town. He expressed disapproval of the intersection of Airport Way, Gaffney, Richardson Highway, and Steese Highway (GARS). He acknowledged it being a State of Alaska project and that there is a similar project planned for the Johansen/Steese intersection, but stated he believes the City should ask the State to consider turning it back into what it was.

Mayor Pruhs read an update from Public Works Director Jacobson which stated that the necessary parts for the inoperable streetlights had arrived and are with the contractor who will be performing the repair. He thanked V. Buberger for bringing matters to the Council's attention.

Neisje Steinkruger – N. Steinkruger shared her background as an experienced professional in the justice system. She stated that although she is retired, individuals are still occasionally referred to her for legal advice, as was the case for the parents of Kayla Benjamin who was murdered by her boyfriend on May 23, 2020. N. Steinkruger provided details about the prosecution of the case and how alleged failures by the Fairbanks Police Department (FPD) resulted in the case being moved out of Fairbanks and eventually dismissed. She asked the Council to look at domestic violence cases within the Fairbanks area, including the number of arrests and prosecutions; she also asked the Council to look at how many cases go to trial, fall by the wayside, receive plea bargains, or get dismissed. N. Steinkruger asked that an independent investigation occur in the case of K. Benjamin's murder to determine what went wrong and ensure it does not happen again.

Ms. Rogers indicated that she had many questions for N. Steinkruger but, recognizing the constraints of time and setting, expressed hope that they could find a more suitable opportunity to have a discussion at a later time. N. Steinkruger stated that this was the first time in her career that she has been unable to reassure a client. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that he will be in touch with her.

Victoria Dowling – V. Dowling spoke to the issue of derelict properties across the City and about the negligence of property owners. She stated that a lack of accountability for crumbling homes negatively impacts the essence of the community. She indicated that she has sent numerous letters to the City over the last five years, some of which have been ignored while others have received

less-than-satisfactory responses. V. Dowling expressed frustration with the expectation of unlimited patience from citizens as years of bad behavior continues to impact the quality of life in Fairbanks. She cited issues such as public intoxication, loose dogs attacking tourists, and individuals relieving themselves on City streets and parking lots. She stated that if a structure lacks functioning water service, it should be deemed unfit for living. She testified that the City cannot allow the problems to continue to fester; she added that rules should apply to everyone and that the City Code should be clear and unwavering. She implored the Council to take decisive action on dilapidated properties around the City and not let the community be defined by neglect.

Ms. Sprinkle asked how many properties V. Dowling and her family own in the area. V. Dowling identified three homes which she has a financial interest in within the downtown area.

Hearing no additional requests for comment, **Mayor Pruhs** declared Citizen's Comments closed.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA

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

Ms. Sprinkle requested to pull item 12(a), Resolution No. 5092, 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 November 13, 2023

APPROVED on the Consent Agenda

b) Regular Meeting Minutes of November 27, 2023

APPROVED on the Consent Agenda

SPECIAL ORDERS

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

Lic. #	DBA	License Type	Licensee	Address
11927	Green Life Supply, LLC	Retail Marijuana Store	Green Life Supply, LLC	511 30th Avenue

Clerk Snider informed the Council that the memorandum in the packet included a recommendation by the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) to protest the application; however, the issue had since been resolved, and CFO Bell had lifted her recommendation to protest.

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

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

Ms. Sprinkle asked if the issue related to unpaid taxes. Clerk Snider confirmed that was correct.

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

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

MAYOR'S COMMENTS AND REPORT

Mayor Pruhs invited Crisis Now Coordinator Brenda McFarlane to give a report. B. McFarlane asked Colton Varholak, Team Leader of the AmeriCorps Focus Team, to share details about their efforts over the last six weeks. C. Varholak reported that his team served the community by assisting various organizations such as the Fairbanks Community Food Bank, Stone Soup Café, Tanana Chiefs Conference, and the City's own Project Homeless Connect. He shared that team members have loved their time in Fairbanks and will be sad to say goodbye.

Ms. Sprinkle asked where members of the team are from. C. Varholak indicated that they are based out of San Francisco, CA. Team members shared their individual home states.

Mr. Marney asked where the team's next assignment would be. C. Varholak shared that they will be heading to the Palmer and Wasilla area to assist with various programs and special events, including the 2024 Arctic Winter Games.

Mayor Pruhs asked what the best thing was they learned about Fairbanks during their stay. One of the team members [name not provided] stated that there is a much greater awareness of and support for the nonprofit sector within the community, compared to anywhere else they have been. **Mayor Pruhs** expressed appreciation to the team for their efforts. **Ms. Rogers** echoed the same and invited them to return anytime.

Mayor Pruhs reported that CFO Margarita Bell had been honored as the Municipal Employee of the Year for 2023 by the Alaska Municipal League. He shared details about the nomination process and their great joy in seeing her receive this much-deserved award. Those present recognized CFO Bell with a standing ovation.

COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. Ringstad expressed appreciation for the understanding extended to him with his recent absence due to a family trip; he thanked the Council for adjusting its schedule for work pertaining to the 2024 budget. He inquired about a report of a carbon monoxide issue at the Fairbanks Emergency Communications Center (FECC) the week prior. Chief of Staff Sanders explained that

staff is working to identify the cause. He explained that there are two air handling systems in the building, so the FECC area was not affected as badly as other areas.

Mr. Marney thanked those who gave public comments, stating that it makes his job more fun.

Ms. Tidwell thanked the AmeriCorps team for their work in the community and invited them to return. She thanked N. Steinkruger for bringing the K. Benjamin case to the Council's attention and echoed Ms. Rogers' willingness to meet and discuss the matter further.

Mr. Cleworth noted that time is the most precious gift one can offer and thanked the AmeriCorps team for what they had given to Fairbanks. He recalled decades of interactions with the late Frank Turney who would at times be very critical of the Council, while at other times would share valuable wisdom which would subsequently inform action by the City on various issues. He expressed the belief that F. Turney would be tickled pink to know that the Council was carrying on the tradition of the reading of the Bill of Rights every December; he added that the fundamental rights are more important than ever. **Mr. Cleworth** concurred that V. Dowling had been patient with the City and discussed past efforts regarding the abatement of derelict and neglected buildings. He stated that one problem he feels the Council has faced over the years is not having the teeth to deal with some of the property issues. He stated he is open to suggestions in revising the City Code to better address those issues, while still allowing due process for property owners. He expressed appreciation to N. Steinkruger for her comments, noting that this was the first time he was made aware of the case she discussed. He acknowledged that if a ball was dropped, the City needs to know and will look into it. He noted that domestic violence calls monopolize a lot of City police officers' time, and they take those issues seriously.

Ms. Rogers echoed the comments about the AmeriCorps team's contribution to the community, CFO Bell's well-deserved recognition, and the challenges with neglected properties. She reiterated her concern for the issues raised by N. Steinkruger and committed to a direct focus on such matters. She apologized for V. Dowling's experience with not feeling heard and thanked her for her tenacity and continued patience as the Council looks ahead to update the Code on abatement issues.

Ms. Sprinkle shared her appreciation for the recent positive event honoring outgoing Fire Chief Scott Raygor and conveyed support for newly appointed Chief Cocco. She concurred with Mr. Cleworth's thoughts and V. Dowling's comments on the issue of abatement, noting that the focus needs to be on safety, fairness, and economic development.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a) Ordinance No. 6267, as Amended – An Ordinance Amending the 2023 Operating and Capital Budgets for the Fourth Time. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No, 6267, as Amended.

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

Mr. Cleworth cited an email from Aldean Kilbourn, Chair of the Clay Street Cemetery Commission, noting her appeal for a funding request in 2024 that had been cut during the budget process. He acknowledged the significant level of volunteer work that the Commission performs and expressed his desire to see the work continue. He asked if it might be prudent to hold off on any action until the Discretionary Fund Committee awards were finalized. **Mr. Marney**, Chair of the Discretionary Fund Committee, indicated that the grant fund is larger than ever; he added that the number of applicants went from 26 to 17 due to various reasons and, as a result, the Clay Street Cemetery Commission will do well. **Mr. Cleworth** expressed satisfaction with the information from Mr. Marney but stated that the Council should keep A. Kilbourn's request on the backburner.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6267, AS AMENDED, AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6267, as Amended, ADOPTED.

- b) Ordinance No. 6268 – An Ordinance Adopting the 2024 Operating and Capital Budgets. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

Mayor Pruhs shared highlights of the City's 2023 fiscal year, including successful negotiations for the renewal of two union contracts, the transfer of funds to the Capital Fund and Permanent Fund, and the approval of incentives for recruitment and retention in crucial staffing areas. He acknowledged that the City approached the 2024 budget differently by focusing on strategic planning and stated he appreciated the Council's questions and understanding of needs for the coming year. He noted that in 2024 the City will be addressing the Fairbanks Firefighter Union (FFU) contract as well as Dispatch staffing issues. He added that the current surplus will allow the City to be successful in those efforts while being prepared for any surprises that may come.

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Ms. Rogers**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6268.

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

Mr. Cleworth recapped that the voters approved the removal of the tax "cap-within-the-cap" in 2022, which provided the City with additional funds in 2023. He noted that the Council quickly spent the money through various efforts, as Mayor Pruhs highlighted. He stated that they are fortunate to have more to work with in the coming year due to income from increased interest rates. He stated, however, that he is concerned about relying on that one-time money for new, fixed expenses and urged the Council to remember that interest income can go away at any time. He reminded the Council that the Finance Committee gave a two-year forecast that predicts a large, increasing City deficit in 2025 and 2026.

Mr. Ringstad concurred that the Finance Committee's outlook includes reasons to be concerned in the next three to five years, should the Council choose to use one-time surpluses for long-term expenses. He stated that CFO Bell has done excellent work to keep them apprised of these issues.

Mr. Marney indicated that the only item that raises his concern with the budget is the issue of overtime. He stated that if the City does not get a handle on overtime, it will be part of their demise. He noted that the City's level of overtime would not be acceptable to companies in the private sector, and it should not be acceptable for government. He expressed willingness to cut overtime.

Mayor Pruhs explained that in the middle of each month he receives a report on overtime from the Public Works, Police, and Fire Departments, which he reviews with the Chief of Staff and the respective department heads. He stated that going forward he would like to include one Councilmember in each of those meetings so they can have more insight into the details regarding overtime costs. He reminded the Council that the budget is theirs to amend, if desired, and that if a department runs out of budgeted overtime funds, they will have to request more from the Council.

Mr. Ringstad acknowledged the problems that overtime expenses pose, both in actual cost and in the burden on employees. He stated that the best way to improve would be to fill positions and ensure adequate staffing. He expressed willingness to reduce the overtime budget. **Ms. Sprinkle** concurred. **Mr. Marney** noted that even if they dropped the Fire Department's overtime amount from \$900,000 to \$500,000, they would still have the highest City department overtime budget.

Mr. Marney, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6268 by reducing the amount of budgeted overtime expense for the Fire Department from \$900,000 to \$500,000.

Mr. Cleworth indicated that the FFD has a minimum staffing mandate that is part of the collective bargaining agreement (CBA), which can only be changed through renegotiation. He stated the FFD is the only City department where management does not have the right to dictate things like minimum staffing. He suggested that it may be wiser to make an adjustment to the bottom line of the department's budget, rather than to a specific line item such as overtime, which would allow the Fire Chief and Mayor to determine how best to use the allocated funds. **Mr. Marney** agreed.

Mr. Marney, with concurrence of the second, withdrew the motion on the floor.

Mr. Marney, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6268 by reducing the total FFD personnel budget from \$8,500,470 to \$8,000,470.

Mr. Ringstad shared that he was surprised as a new Council member to learn that the Fire Chief did not have the authority to make decisions staffing. He asked if it would be better to reduce the total department budget by the proposed amount rather than specifying personnel.

Mr. Cleworth indicated that there are certain budgeted expense areas for equipment, maintenance, etc. that they need to remain, so if the desire is to reign in overtime, any adjustments should be concentrated to the personnel line item. He stated that not adding new positions is also an important part of the equation, but he supports the new Chief having the opportunity to review the situation and come up with solutions.

Ms. Sprinkle expressed concern about limiting staffing levels, noting that new positions would cost less than forced overtime in the long run.

Mr. Cleworth shared details about increases in staffing over the last 20 years and stated that the Fire Department has grown 21%. He stated the department with the next largest increase, Public Works, grew only by 13%. He stated that for decades he has heard the argument that more staffing will result in less overtime, but he has yet to see that materialize because the minimum staffing level continues to get raised. He pointed out that 20 years ago FPD had a budget that was \$1MM greater than that of the FFD, and that is now completely reversed. He added that it has everything to do with the management constraints in the CBA.

Mr. Ringstad asked for clarification on specific areas of allocation for funds across the Fire Department's budget, as currently presented. CFO Bell provided confirmation that Mr. Ringstad's understanding of specific items he referenced was correct. **Mr. Ringstad** stated that he was open to making the adjustment to either the personnel line item or elsewhere, to have the same net result.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if the City could hope for Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grants in the following year. **Mayor Pruhs** indicated that it was not a realistic hope after being rejected twice, despite seeming to meet the criteria and submitting complete applications.

Ms. Tidwell stated that she is having a hard time reconciling how the City can reduce overall staffing levels while reducing overtime costs. **Mr. Cleworth** clarified that they are not cutting any positions – that, in fact, one had been added since the previous year – but they should hold off on adding more staff. **Ms. Tidwell** replied that, as she understands, the suggestion is to not fill current, budgeted vacant positions, which would have a similar effect.

Mayor Pruhs reminded the Council that if the department exceeds its overtime budget, he will have to return to the Council with an explanation as to why. He stated that at that time the Council would decide whether to approve additional funding. He pointed out that the topic at hand is overtime costs, particularly for the FFD, which has higher overtime costs than all others. He stated he will provide monthly updates to the Council on how departments are doing in terms of overtime.

Ms. Tidwell indicated that if the Council is going to reduce the overtime budget by such a large amount, she would like to see the temporary positions funded that had been cut. She asked if doing so would help meet the department's needs and reduce overtime.

Fire Chief Cocco spoke about the challenge of managing overtime. He noted that while scheduled overtime, due to 24-hour shifts, can be accurately forecasted, there are numerous contributing factors which result in unplanned overtime such as callouts, injury, illness, trainings, and other schedule irregularities. He highlighted that the FFD is only funded for the contractual minimum staffing level of 13 employees at any given time, so there is no wiggle room anytime someone is out and they must call someone in for overtime. He explained that there is little-to-no option to manage that kind of overtime as they juggle the realities of employees' lives and their minimum-staff budget expectations. He indicated that funding for the temporary positions would be a step in the right direction and should be considered 100% necessary, but he is anticipating struggles by the start of 2024.

Ms. Sprinkle noted that the temporary positions are those in the bullpen, waiting for an opportunity at a permanent position. She asked for details about the community paramedic role. Chief Cocco confirmed that the community paramedic is for preventive care, rather than reactive

services like most of the department's other duties. He explained that it is a regular, full-time position without any expectations or opportunities for overtime to help with suppression staffing and schedule irregularities. He added that the position helps the department in many other ways.

Ms. Tidwell asked if a reduction in overtime could be achieved if the temporary positions were funded. Chief Cocco indicated that while it is difficult to forecast with total certainty, such an arrangement would put him in a plus-one staffing situation, barring schedule irregularities, which would allow some wiggle room. He stated that he does not believe it would be enough to bring the overtime down to the desired amount, but it would make an impact.

Mr. Cleworth explained that in 2019 the minimum staffing level was at 11, which allowed the City to run three ambulances and a fire engine. He noted that the minimum was raised to 12 in the CBA that followed, then again to 13 over the summer, which has tied the City's hands. He stated he believes the City should have the right to go down to 11 personnel during slower periods. He questioned whether the Council would be asked to raise the minimum staffing level to 14 or 15 if they hired more people to provide some wiggle room, and he commented that the Council has put itself in this position with past decisions. He clarified that the budget, as it currently stands, funds the temporary positions. He explained that Mayor Pruhs had removed them, but the Council added them back in during a work session.

Ms. Rogers stated that it is difficult for her to consider removing such a large amount of funding from the budget after the work that had already been done.

Mr. Marney asked Chief Cocco if his preference would be to see a cut in the overall personnel budget or just the specific line item of overtime. Chief Cocco responded that he would like to see neither but understands that the overtime budget is low-hanging fruit and makes more sense. He stated it will take time to see progress with the overtime issue. He reiterated that the FFD will be just one person over the minimum staffing level, which will allow only for slight flexibility.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if they are funding 18 or 21 firefighters and stated that she does not see the funding for the temporary positions. **Mr. Cleworth** indicated that there is funding for 18 firefighters, they are increasing the number of captains from 7 to 10, and the temporary positions are included.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6268 BY REDUCING THE TOTAL FFD PERSONNEL BUDGET FROM \$8,500,470 TO \$8,000,470 AS FOLLOWS

YEAS: Cleworth, Marney, Ringstad
NAYS: Tidwell, Sprinkle, Rogers, Pruhs
Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION FAILED.

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Rogers**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6268 by striking the pay increase for the City Council under the City Clerk's Office budget.

Ms. Rogers stated that she does not support any raise to the Council, as she considers the Council's role to be one of public service; she added that she donates her compensation to local programs.

Ms. Sprinkle asked when the item was last considered. **Mayor Pruhs** stated he does not believe there has been an increase in decades, and he felt it was appropriate to include it for the Council's consideration. **Ms. Sprinkle** indicated that she is struggling with the idea, knowing how much time is required to truly serve on the Council. **Mayor Pruhs** responded that, while he knows it is a sensitive subject, given how long it had been since the stipend was last increased, he was okay being the one who put it forward for consideration.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6268 BY STRIKING THE PAY INCREASE FOR THE CITY COUNCIL UNDER THE CITY CLERK'S OFFICE BUDGET AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Cleworth, Marney, Rogers, Pruhs

NAYS: Ringstad, Sprinkle, Tidwell

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

Mr. Cleworth stated that in the past, the Council allocated funds for the FECC so employees could receive training, as needed. He noted that because that department has been far from fully staffed, and will remain so for some time, he would like to see the training amount reduced for the coming year. He clarified that he still wants to see those funds budgeted for training but in a way that can be utilized by any City department, including Dispatch, should departmental training funds be exhausted. He expressed that this will particularly help with overlapping training when someone is leaving a position and a replacement can be hired prior to the employee's departure.

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6268, as Amended, by reducing the line item for "trainees (with benefits)" under the FECC budget from \$270,000 to \$175,000 and by adding to the General Fund a new account with \$40,000 for training, available to any City department.

Mr. Ringstad indicated that he supports that approach and considers its flexibility a much better way to tackle the City's needs. **Mayor Pruhs** agreed that it is a sensible and workable motion. **Mr. Ringstad** asked if \$40,000 would be enough to serve all departments. CFO Bell responded that it would serve a limited scope of overlap situations, and she recommended \$100,000. **Ms. Rogers** stated she believes it is a good idea that should be funded appropriately.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if it would be possible to remove any other training funds already budgeted across other departments for the same purpose and add them to the new account. CFO Bell stated that she could identify some areas that could be adjusted to increase the new account up to about \$75,000, but it would depend on whether the Council wanted to include the FFD.

Mr. Ringstad indicated that he is not too concerned about the specific amount but that he primarily wants to ensure successful transitions when someone retires. He stated he trusts that the funds will be managed responsibly by the Mayor and CFO. **Mayor Pruhs** acknowledged that the important thing is getting the account started; he stated they will have a good perspective a year from now for future planning, and budget amendments can occur, if needed, throughout the year.

Mr. Cleworth, with concurrence of the second, revised the motion such that the FECC line-item reduction would be \$270,510 to \$170,510, and the amount for the new account under the General Fund would be \$75,000.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6268, AS AMENDED, BY REDUCING THE LINE ITEM FOR "TRAINEES (WITH BENEFITS)" UNDER THE FECC BUDGET FROM \$270,510 TO \$170,510 AND BY ADDING TO THE GENERAL FUND A NEW ACCOUNT WITH \$75,000 FOR TRAINING, AVAILABLE TO ANY CITY DEPARTMENT, AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

[Clerk Note: While the amendment for the reduction of \$100,000 under FECC applied to salaries only, the effect of the amendment also decreased benefits expenses for the department by \$50,650.]

Mr. Cleworth spoke to FFD staffing, asking if, in the event all permanent positions under the CBA were filled and funds for temporary positions were exhausted, they would lose or layoff the temporary positions. Chief of Staff Sanders responded that that would be the case, citing how the Public Works (PW) department does not have much overtime, but instead has a huge budget for temporary workers. **Mr. Cleworth** clarified that his concern would be for how long the City would retain an employee in a situation where someone is hired and trained with the intention of becoming a permanent employee but a permanent position does not open up. Chief of Staff Sanders explained that PW has a similar situation, and some employees are in a non-permanent status for years. **Mr. Cleworth** indicated that such a scenario is covered under the CBA for PW, but he does not believe that is the case for the FFD, and the City could be in real trouble if that were to happen.

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6268, as Amended, by eliminating the budget for the temporary positions at FFD, reducing the department's wages by \$125,400 and its benefits by \$76,500, for a total reduction of \$201,900.

Mr. Cleworth stated that if the FFD is going to have temporary positions, it should be included in the CBA and should be consistent across all departments.

Mr. Ringstad acknowledged that the separation between temporary and contractual positions often gets muddled in the view of higher entities. He stated that they are heading into an area where, for all intents and purposes, a temporary position gets viewed with comparable expectations as a permanent one, which may create complications from legal and human resources standpoints.

Ms. Sprinkle pointed out that PW has temporary positions and that for the sake of FFD, those workers come from various situations but are aware of what they are being hired for.

Ms. Tidwell expressed agreement with **Mr. Cleworth** that the same approach should be used with all departments but pointed out that Dispatch already does this by having staff hired and trained in anticipation of shifting into a permanent position. She pointed out that this approach has been explained as the vehicle to help reduce overtime at FFD, and they need the temporary positions.

Mr. Cleworth disagreed about FFD not having enough staff. He pointed out that the CBA for PW has verbiage that addresses temporary positions, but FFD's CBA does not. He explained that the FECC situation also involves multiple vacant, permanent positions, whereas FFD is fully staffed. He added that the personnel budget for the Fire Department is set to increase by \$1MM in 2024.

Mr. Marney referred to the existing relationships with other fire service entities in the borough where they hire additional help on an as-needed basis.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6268, AS AMENDED BY ELIMINATING THE BUDGET FOR THE TEMPORARY POSITIONS AT FFD, REDUCING THE DEPARTMENT'S WAGES BY \$125,400 AND ITS BENEFITS BY \$76,500, FOR A TOTAL REDUCTION OF \$201,900, AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Rogers, Cleworth, Marney, Ringstad
NAYS: Sprinkle, Tidwell
Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

Mr. Ringstad spoke of the Structural Engineer position in the Building Department which has been vacant for years. He acknowledged that the Council approved hiring and relocation incentives but that it feels silly to keep funding a position that is going nowhere. He suggested the City get more aggressive with recruitment, consider contracting the position out, or find another solution.

Mr. Cleworth thanked the Mayor and department heads for the work that went into the budget process. He noted that the changes the Council is making, as a percentage of the total budget, is almost nothing. He expressed appreciation for the heavy lifting during work sessions.

Mr. Ringstad shared that the Finance Committee has discussed the importance of supporting the Capital Fund every year, so they do not end up with a long-term deferred maintenance situation.

Mayor Pruhs commented on the remarkable work of the Council and department heads, particularly CFO Bell, in the preparation of the budget.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6268, AS AMENDED, AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Tidwell, Sprinkle, Ringstad, Marney, Rogers, Cleworth
NAYS: None
Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6268, as Amended, ADOPTED.

NEW BUSINESS

- a) Resolution No. 5092 – A Resolution Amending the City Schedule of Fees and Charges for Services by Increasing the Tow Fee. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to APPROVE Resolution No. 5092.

Ms. Sprinkle stated she would like to know more about the resolution. **Mayor Pruhs** explained that it had been a while since the fee had been reviewed. He stated that the City's contractor requested a fee increase, hence the proposed increase.

Mr. Cleworth asked if the towing contract had gone out for an RFP recently. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that it had not. **Mr. Cleworth** asked how the current company had been selected. Attorney Chard explained that Interior Towing has held the primary contract for several years and that they are currently in a contract extension period. He shared details about the impound and towing process.

Mr. Marney asked if the towing fee is financially a wash for the City. **Mayor Pruhs** indicated that the City does not, nor does it try to, make any significant revenue from the item. Attorney Chard gave more specific information about longer-term impound scenarios, including bail payments for a vehicle, when citations are issued for serious offenses.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION NO. 5092 AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Resolution No. 5092 APPROVED.

- b) Ordinance No. 6269 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Sec. 74-117, Room Rental Tax Purpose and Limitation, by Adding Compliance Requirements to Subsection (e). Introduced by Council Members Marney and Ringstad.

ADVANCED on the CONSENT AGENDA.

- c) Ordinance No. 6270 – An Ordinance Amending the Collective Bargaining Agreement Between the City of Fairbanks and the Fairbanks AFL-CIO Crafts Council. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

ADVANCED on the CONSENT AGENDA.

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. Ringstad stated that he had no reports or additional comments.

Ms. Rogers invited Crisis Now Coordinator Brenda McFarlane to give a report. B. McFarlane informed the Council that a group is coming up in April to provide a free clinic with medical, dental, and vision services, as well as host a behavioral health clinic at Ryan Middle School, and they are looking for volunteers. She stated she did not have many details yet but that an article should soon be published in the newspaper. B. McFarlane shared that a local member of the Crisis Now team had spoken to a larger group in Anchorage recently to provide details about the efforts they undertake locally, particularly with struggling veterans. She expressed appreciation for the support the community receives from the Alaska Mental Health Trust. **Ms. Rogers** reported on the

active status of the Behavioral Health Community Coalition. She shared details about her engagement with local youth from Effie Kokrine Charter School who have expressed interest in learning about City departments. She noted that many committees have been taking a break during the holiday season, but the Reentry Coalition will meet later in the week. She shared that State Senator Scott Kawasaki has been championing certain issues on behalf of that group.

Ms. Tidwell stated that she had no reports or additional comments.

Mr. Cleworth asked if Mayor Pruhs had any additional information on the “no fly list” issue that had been raised at the last meeting. **Mayor Pruhs** responded that he did not have an update yet but that he had not forgotten the issue. **Mr. Cleworth** stated that in the Council’s earlier vote on Ordinance No. 6267, he had forgotten to share details about a good conversation he had with the chief mechanic at Public Works regarding repairs to the aerial platform. He indicated that he has more pause for concern after learning that the work cannot be performed locally, that the company would not send someone to Fairbanks, and that the equipment will have to travel 4,200 miles to Pennsylvania for repair. He noted that they have one more work session to discuss whether that is an expenditure the Council wants to commit to, rather than pursuing the purchase of newer equipment. He acknowledged that while Council members sometimes disagree about certain budgetary matters for the Fire Department, he wants to ensure there are always three ambulances available and that City employees have the best tools and equipment possible to perform their duties. He cited the importance of maintaining a high rating in the insurance industry standards and spoke about how Fairbanks is one of less than one percent of surveyed departments across the country to have the highest rating possible. He stated the rating pertains to quality of equipment, staffing, and more. He stated that he believes the FFD is a shining example in their field.

Mr. Marney reported that the presentation meeting for Discretionary Fund applicants went well and that most of the agencies will see higher awards, given that several applications were eliminated for various issues. He stated they will meet again in January to review processes.

Ms. Sprinkle reported that in a recent meeting of the Chena Riverfront Commission, the group reviewed the situation of a property which is adjacent to Pike’s Waterfront Lodge. She shared that the lot is owned by AKDOT, which is looking to relinquish it, and that the Borough is considering putting it up for public auction after the initial hope to convert it to a park was not funded. She noted, however, that Jay Ramras would like to purchase it, which has created a curious situation. She expressed appreciation for Mr. Cleworth’s thoroughness as the Council worked through the budget and shared details about the upcoming winter solstice event downtown.

Ms. Rogers asked if Police Chief Dupee could provide an update for the FPD. Chief Dupee shared that the FPD has a new lateral transfer coming from the Anchorage Police Department, which is good news; he stated, however, that it will be challenging to have a third officer dedicated for field training, as they typically try to limit that to two at a time. He reported that the FPD plans to send three more individuals to the academy in January. **Mayor Pruhs** commented that the action the Council took earlier in the year seems to be bearing fruit. Chief Dupee shared additional details about recent promotions within his department. **Mayor Pruhs** commended the professional response of three FPD officers when they were recently called to deal with a situation at the DMV. **Ms. Rogers** added her praise to the officers’ performance and attributed such to the department’s training and leadership efforts.

CITY CLERK'S REPORT

Clerk Snider thanked the Council for supporting training efforts across the City, especially within her department. She reported that the annual conference for the Alaska Association of Municipal Clerks (AAMC) had occurred the week prior and that there is great value in those experiences. She also expressed appreciation for the Council's support of her budget for the coming year.

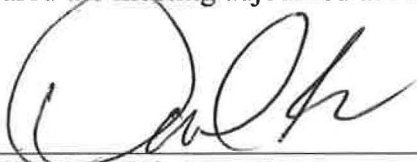
CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Attorney Chard thanked Council members for their service to the community.

ADJOURNMENT

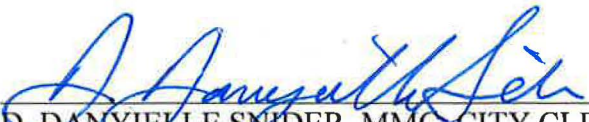
Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to ADJOURN the meeting.

Hearing no objection, **Mayor Pruhs** declared the meeting adjourned at 9:21 p.m.



DAVID PRUHS, MAYOR

ATTEST:



D. DANYIELLE SNIDER, MMC, CITY CLERK

Transcribed by: CC