



FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, DECEMBER 18, 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, 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

Also Present:                            D. Danyielle Snider, City Clerk  
   Michael Sanders, Chief of Staff  
   Thomas Chard, City Attorney  
   Margarita Bell, Chief Financial Officer  
   Ron Dupee, Police Chief  
   Richard Sweet, Deputy Police Chief  
   Kristi Merideth, Dispatch Manager (remotely)  
   Brynn Butler, Housing Coordinator (remotely)  
   Brenda McFarlane, Crisis Now Coordinator

**INVOCATION**

The invocation was given by City Clerk Danyielle Snider.

**FLAG SALUTATION**

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

**CEREMONIAL MATTERS (Proclamations, Introductions, Recognitions, Awards)**

a)        Presentation of Funds to Crisis Now

Charity Gadapee, Director of Visitor and Community Engagement with Explore Fairbanks, shared that one year ago they started Golden Heart Giving and Tourism Cares programs, where they hold pop-up fundraisers to support various efforts in the community. She explained how they partner with local businesses who select a nonprofit organization they wish to support and that, to-date, they have raised over \$11,000. She reported that in October Explore Fairbanks hosted a travel industry convention, and Beth Richards with Riverside Eats and Drinks chose Crisis Now as the program to raise funds for. C. Gadapee stated that during the convention week, \$4,000 was raised, and she presented a check in that amount to Crisis Now Coordinator Brenda McFarlane.

## 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 thanked the Mayor, noting that some of the previously inoperative streetlights on the Old Steese Highway, which he had addressed in prior meetings, were now functioning but indicated that others were still out of order. He spoke against the recently renovated Gaffney–Airport–Richardson–Steese (GARS) intersection, stating that it was the biggest blunder he had seen in his nearly 50 years in Fairbanks. He also spoke against the construction of various roundabouts across the City, stating that they are unsafe and inefficient for the Fairbanks 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. Marney**, moved to APPROVE the Agenda and Consent Agenda.

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

City Clerk Snider read the Consent Agenda 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
4678	Fairbanks Junior Ice Dogs	Recreational Site	Fairbanks Junior Ice Dogs, Inc.	1920 Lathrop Street

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

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

**Mr. Ringstad** noted the numerous events listed on the call-out report for the licensee's address.

**Ms. Sprinkle** asked if the license was for the hockey team's alcohol sales during games at the Big Dipper Ice Arena. **Mayor Pruhs** confirmed that was correct. **Ms. Sprinkle** stated that it would have been nice if a representative for the licensee had attended the meeting. **Ms. Rogers** agreed.

**Mr. Cleworth** clarified that the report shows all calls associated with the address, whether the call occurred during an Ice Dogs event or not, and that many incidents may not relate to the license. **Ms. Rogers** indicated that the report does not seem unusual. **Mr. Ringstad** stated that upon review,

he would blame the licensee for almost nothing on the report, although it does cause him concern for public safety in that part of town.

Dispatch Manager Kristi Merideth explained that the Big Dipper is the most prominent landmark in that area, and individuals often reference it when calling in. She stated that as such, the calls get tagged to that address even if they have nothing to do with the building itself or the businesses registered there; she added that the reports do not demonstrate that very well. She indicated that staff can potentially adjust how information is gathered in the future for a more accurate impression of the licensee. She confirmed that there are no issues with the applicant.

**Mr. Marney** asked if businesses are notified when their license renewal application is being considered by the Council. Clerk Snider explained that licensees are notified whenever they are applying for a new license or when there is a departmental objection or protest. She explained that routine renewal applications are initiated with the State and are noticed by the City in the agenda and, as such, no additional notification is made to the licensee, as it is assumed that they track their application's progress.

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

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

NAYS: None

**Mayor Pruhs** declared the MOTION CARRIED.

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

Lic. #	DBA	License Type	Licensee	Address
10113	Great Alaskan Bud Company	Retail Marijuana Store	SP&C Enterprises, LLC	1905 Livengood Avenue

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

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

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

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

NAYS: None

**Mayor Pruhs** declared the MOTION CARRIED.

## MAYOR'S COMMENTS AND REPORT

**Mayor Pruhs** invited the City's lobbyist, Yuri Morgan, to report on the Governor's proposed budget.

Y. Morgan provided a physical copy of the Short Fiscal Summary, FY23-FY25, which he had previously emailed to the Council. He gave a review of the Governor's FY25 priorities, including affordable housing, food, childcare, and energy, with continued investment in education and public safety. He explained the shift in revenue sources over recent years, with most coming from the State's Permanent Fund rather than oil revenues. Y. Morgan highlighted that projections for the next year are flat, with appropriations following the status quo and agency operations remaining constant. He noted that they will hear a lot about education and energy in the coming months, with the Governor likely making efforts through legislation in January. He discussed projections for the current year's surplus and following year's deficit and stated that there are no proposals for new revenue sources nor significant reductions in existing budgets at this time. Y. Morgan explained that deficits of late have been made up for with money from the Constitutional Budget Reserve. He discussed education funding, staffing with the State Troopers, and the addition of ten new positions for the Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO) program. He shared details about the increasing payments for retirement benefits. **Mr. Ringstad** asked for additional information on that topic. Y. Morgan explained that in 2014, the State enacted a plan that repackaged debt, extended terms, and revised the amortization schedule to include rising payments over time. He discussed funding for community assistance, where the City would have received approximately \$400,000 in funds; however, that was vetoed and dropped, so the amount coming to the City in the fall of 2024 will only be around \$85,000. He noted that the amount would only increase through a supplemental budget during the upcoming legislative session. **Ms. Rogers** addressed the need for the City to continually remind those in Juneau of the importance of funding for communities across the State. She also expressed disapproval of the term "assistance" as the item had previously been referred to as "revenue sharing." Y. Morgan acknowledged that change. He noted that for the first time in over a decade, the State had fully paid off all oil and tax credit liabilities. He cited that from FY20 to November 2023, \$24.5MM in funding related to COVID-19 assistance had been distributed to Alaskan businesses and individuals. He shared details on the Capital Budget, which he described as relatively modest for the year, with only one named grant recipient (tourism industry) and no direct grants to municipalities. Y. Morgan explained that that means the City will have to lobby for Capital funds during the legislative session if there are specific projects needing support from the State. He provided a summary of various State efforts, including the AK Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) project, federal money to establish redundancies in electrical infrastructure, housing assistance for down payments, deferred maintenance, replacement of PFAS-laden firefighting foam, the study of carbon-capture options, the university drone program, and other research projects. He noted that certain senior benefits are scheduled to sunset within the next year, though the Legislature may opt to extend them. Y. Morgan gave an update about added positions in the department handling SNAP benefits, plans for the DOT to establish a statewide snow removal section which would be contracted out, and he shared that UAF is seeking permission to accept federal funding to renovate U-Park school and turn it into a licensed childcare facility.

**Ms. Sprinkle** asked if the Governor had plans to appropriate funds for the matching grant that is part of the Alaska Marine Highway support effort Senator Lisa Murkowski is pursuing. Y. Morgan indicated that about \$92MM is allocated in the budget for that item to replace a 50-year-old vessel.

**Mr. Marney** asked if any money has been designated for the railroad extension project. Y. Morgan stated that there is nothing material or significant allocated for that purpose that he is aware of.

**Ms. Sprinkle** asked if the Governor had done anything to bolster the DOT funding that he will need for the next several years. Y. Morgan explained that the State is budgeting about 10% over what it normally would for this purpose and that the total amount comes to around \$200MM when matching federal funds through the recent infrastructure bill were factored in.

**Mayor Pruhs** asked Police Chief Dupee to give a report on any significant FPD updates.

Chief Dupee shared that the FPD received a letter from Nathan Jackson, a new recruit from Arizona and the first African American officer to join the FPD in quite some time. He shared that N. Jackson will attend the academy in Sitka beginning in January and that the FPD has two more recruits in the background process who will likely advance to the academy stage soon. He noted that the FPD also has three officers currently in the field training phase.

**Mr. Ringstad** asked about the number of officers currently at the FPD. Chief Dupee indicated that there is a total of 33 officers, including the three new recruits. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that it appears the recruitment incentives the Council passed earlier in the year are working.

**Mayor Pruhs** shared that earlier in the day he met with the Building Official, Chief of Staff, Chief Financial Officer, and Human Resources staff to discuss the vacant Structural Engineer position which has been unfilled since August 2022. He reminded the Council that the individual who retired from the role continues to work part-time in a hybrid remote capacity. He indicated that when asked if services were being curtailed by the staffing situation, Building Official Clooten stated they were not. He stated that C. Clooten explained how larger jobs are contracted out to local firms, but former Structural Engineer Marty Woodrow was still taking care of the smaller projects. **Mayor Pruhs** noted that issues will begin to crop up once M. Woodrow stops serving in that part-time role, so it is vital that the City find backup solutions sooner rather than later. He shared that while they had previously looked to UAF for graduates as a source for recruitment, they are expanding efforts to see if there are any UAF staff members interested in part-time work.

### **COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS**

**Ms. Sprinkle** asked if any UAF staff were interested in the part-time Structural Engineer work. **Mayor Pruhs** clarified that the plan was discussed earlier in the day and will be pursued. **Ms. Sprinkle** wished the Mayor an early "happy birthday." She shared that in any given week, there are numerous individuals telling her they smell cannabis near the river and Cushman Street, and she wondered if the City could track down the source.

**Ms. Rogers** expressed appreciation for the reports from Chief Dupee and Y. Morgan. She stated she looks forward to meeting with Y. Morgan again in the following month.

**Mr. Cleworth** addressed the earlier comments of V. Buberger, noting that he agreed on some matters. He stated that he finds many roundabouts in town favorable, although a few smaller ones seem to be more of an obstruction and are likely a hassle for Public Works. He stated that the City should be on top of some designs and concepts that get put forth and be able to weigh in before plans are implemented, particularly the larger project slated for the intersection of the Johansen Expressway and the Steese Highway. He suggested that he and the Mayor ask for an update on that project at the next FAST Planning meeting, as the project seems to continually evolve. He thanked Chief Dupee and Y. Morgan for their reports.

**Ms. Tidwell** stated that she is excited to hear that the Council's efforts in the past year are making a difference with FPD officer recruitment.

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

**Ms. Rogers** shared thoughts about the importance of roundabouts, including the smaller ones, to mitigate speeding through residential areas where more children are present.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- a) 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. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

**Mr. Cleworth**, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6269.

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

**Mr. Marney** stated that he and co-sponsor Mr. Ringstad would like to draft a better version of the ordinance, and he indicated a desire to postpone the matter to the first meeting in January. **Mayor Pruhs** suggested waiting until the first meeting in February. **Mr. Marney** expressed a willingness to compromise.

**Mr. Marney**, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to POSTPONE Ordinance No. 6269 to the Regular Council Meeting of January 22, 2024.

**Ms. Rogers** encouraged the sponsors to consider scheduling the postponement for February, as many individuals have time away during the first month of the year.

**Mr. Marney**, with concurrence of the second, revised the date of postponement in his motion to be the first Regular Council Meeting in February.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO POSTPONE ORDINANCE NO. 6269 TO THE REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING ON FEBRUARY 12, 2024, AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

**Mayor Pruhs** declared the MOTION CARRIED.

- b) 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. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

**Ms. Tidwell**, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6270.

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

**Mr. Cleworth** recalled the past work of those in the local carpenter apprenticeship program who restored the old bleachers in City Hall. He asked if the ordinance was instigated by the City or the Union. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that it was the City.

**Ms. Tidwell** spoke in support of the ordinance, noting that anytime the City can use apprenticeship programs it benefits everyone involved. She expressed hope that such partnerships encourage workers to stay in the community and continue their career.

**Mr. Marney** asked why the item was not addressed during the budget process. **Mayor Pruhs** explained that they initially thought it would not require Council approval, but it evolved to a level where Council approval was needed. He expressed frustration with the delay.

**Ms. Sprinkle** asked if this had previously not been allowed due to CBA constraints. **Mayor Pruhs** clarified that it had not occurred in the past simply because it had never been asked for.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6270 AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

**Mayor Pruhs** declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6270 ADOPTED.

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

- a) Fairbanks Diversity Council Meeting Minutes of September 12, 2023

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- b) Discretionary Fund Committee Meeting Minutes of November 8, 2023

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- c) Discretionary Fund Committee Meeting Minutes of December 1, 2023

**COMMITTEE REPORTS AND COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS**

**Mr. Cleworth**, addressing the issue of abatements, encouraged the Council to not drop the ball and schedule a Work Session soon to review the Code, with the understanding that much of what they can do will depend on the City Attorney's research. **Mayor Pruhs** shared that in February he will meet with the Borough staff to develop a program regarding enforcement, which will be designed to have more teeth and be consistent across both municipalities. He indicated that the Council will likely have more than one work session on the matter once there is something to share.

**Mr. Cleworth** continued by reporting that the Federal Open Market Committee recently met and discussed lowering interest rates, which led to the price of gold shooting up only to fall back down quickly. He noted that drastic changes like this have the potential to impact the City, as a sizable portion of City revenue for the coming years is based on interest income from investments; he advised that the Council be mindful of any warnings from the CFO. He reiterated that the Council should be cautious about adding significant fixed costs for the time being. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that a discussion regarding interest rates will be included in the Finance Committee Quarterly Reports. **Mr. Cleworth** spoke about reports of the smell of cannabis – not just downtown but in other areas of the city. He shared how he always reminds those who contact him that they have a right to complain to regulators, and the Council will see those complaints when licenses come before the Council for renewal. He acknowledged that most of the issues relate to air scrubbers not being maintained. **Mayor Pruhs** reported that he meets quarterly with the Marijuana Control Board (MCB) and that he will take the opportunity at the next meeting to discuss the issue of smells becoming more prevalent in the city. He agreed that the MCB and individual businesses need to understand the expectations for their industry and remember that the Council has a right to protest licenses if inaction continues. **Mr. Cleworth** concluded by wishing a Merry Christmas to City staff and expressed his pleasure with the work that had been accomplished in 2023. He recalled serving on the Council at times when there were significant cuts and non-funding and how it is nice to not be in that situation now.

**Ms. Rogers** concurred with Mr. Cleworth's sentiments about the work done in 2023 and about the Council's ability to function in a considerate manner amongst themselves and with the public. She recognized the presence of Juanita Webb, Chair of the Fairbanks Diversity Council (FDC), and praised her efforts. She shared an uplifting message from former FDC member Montean Jackson.

**Ms. Sprinkle** congratulated the Crisis Now program for having received the donation earlier in the meeting and expressed her excitement at seeing the community support such positive causes.

**Ms. Tidwell** echoed her appreciation for the working relationship between Councilmembers and for the Council's accomplishments in the last year. She wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

**Mr. Marney** reported that the Discretionary Fund Committee had recently met to announce award recommendations. He noted that this may be the first time any entity has received more funds than



requested and that it happened for two organizations this year. He expressed joy with the progress being made at the FPD and congratulated Chief Dupee and Deputy Chief Sweet. He agreed that the Council is united in many ways and wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

**Mr. Ringstad** wished everyone a Merry Christmas and concurred with the success of the year. He expressed hope that the Council could continue the trend and wished everyone enjoyable holidays.

**Mayor Pruhs** thanked V. Buberger for attending and wished him a Merry Christmas.

**Ms. Sprinkle** asked for an update on the City Hall childcare facility. Chief of Staff Sanders reported that it is coming along, albeit with every snag possible primarily due to the age of the building. He shared that, thanks to Design Alaska, the City has an executable contract that can be offered to a contractor for the restroom remodel. He shared that Public Works has been diligently working on its portion of the project, that the Boys and Girls Club is making improvements of the kitchen area in their leased space, and that the anticipated completion date is May 2024. **Mayor Pruhs** spoke in support of M. Sanders' efforts on the project and about the inherent frustration of delays. He praised Facilities Manager Roy Bryant who offered some cost-savings ideas by doing some of the work in-house. **Ms. Sprinkle** stated she looks forward to the ribbon cutting.

#### CITY CLERK'S REPORT

Clerk Snider wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. She stated she will see everyone early in the morning on January 2 for the next Council Work Session.

#### CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Attorney Chard stated that it was a great 2023, and he is looking forward to 2024.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

**Mr. Cleworth**, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to ENTER an Executive Session to discuss Fairbanks Firefighters Union Labor Negotiation Strategy.

**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) Fairbanks Firefighters Union Labor Negotiation Strategy (*entered at 7:50 p.m.*)

The City Council met in Executive Sessions to discuss the above item. Direction was given to the negotiating team, and no action was taken. *The regular meeting resumed at 9:02 p.m.*

**Ms. Sprinkle** noted that she will be absent for the January 2 Work Session and asked to be excused.

**Mayor Pruhs** called for objection and hearing none, declared Ms. Sprinkle EXCUSED from the January 2, 2024 Work Session.

**ADJOURNMENT**

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

Hearing no objection, **Mayor Pruhs** declared the meeting adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

*Michel Smith For*  
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DAVID PRUHS, MAYOR

ATTEST:

*D. Danyielle Snider*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
D. DANYIELLE SNIDER, MMC, CITY CLERK

Transcribed by: CC