



FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, JANUARY 8, 2024
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
 Andrew Coccaro, Fire Chief
 Dominic Lozano, FFD Battalion Chief
 Nick Clark, FFD Captain
 Rick Sweet, Deputy Police Chief
 Kristi Merideth, Dispatch Manager (remotely)
 Jake Merritt, Human Resources Director
 Brynn Butler, Housing Coordinator (remotely)

INVOCATION

The invocation was given by City Clerk Danyielle Snider.

FLAG SALUTATION

Mayor Pruhs asked Human Resources Director Jake Merritt to lead the flag salutation.

CEREMONIAL MATTERS (Proclamations, Introductions, Recognitions, Awards)

Fire Chief Andrew Coccaro recognized three recently promoted members of the FFD: Christopher (Ryan) Holland and Russell Dennis, promoted from Driver to Captain, and Vincent Cavallaro, promoted from Firefighter Paramedic to Driver Paramedic. A pinning ceremony was performed, and Chief Coccaro gave a brief account of the skill proficiency testing and interview process associated with the promotions. He explained various roles within the department and noted the pride, integrity, and public trust the FFD strives to honor as first responders in the community.

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.]

Carol Anthony – C. Anthony spoke in favor of Resolution No. 5094 and thanked the Mayor and Chief of Staff Sanders for seeking Fairbanks' participation in the Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities. She offered herself as a resource, through her role at Fairbanks Memorial Hospital (FMH), for further dialogue on the matter. She expressed excitement for the years ahead and to see Fairbanks become and remain a healthy place for residents to enjoy life as they age.

Victor Buberger – V. Buberger reported on numerous streetlights that are currently out of operation across the City and suggested that perhaps a new contractor should be considered who performs better maintenance. He commended Public Works crews for their snow removal efforts so far this winter and he congratulated the promoted firefighters. He suggested, however, that the City consider pursuing a volunteer firefighter approach like other departments within the borough.

Vivian Stiver – V. Stiver spoke in favor of Resolution No. 5097 and commended the cooperative effort between the City and the board of Moore Street Seniors, Inc. (MSSI). She explained that the program provides affordable housing for low-income seniors by assessing rent at only 30 percent of their net income and offering further deductions to account for medical expenses. She noted the MSSI's positive partnership with the City over the years, including the City-owned land which MSSI leases. She explained that a primary challenge for seniors is transportation, so the proximity of the Moore Street Senior Apartments to the senior center is a huge benefit for residents. V. Stiver reported that they have replaced various pieces of equipment and systems in the building in recent years and that they are now in need of funding for other capital improvements, such as siding and windows. She shared that the funding MSSI received from the State for certain projects was insufficient but noted other grants and donations received recently from both the Rasmuson Foundation and Kinross Fort Knox. She thanked the Council for its support and invited members to visit the facility.

Ms. Rogers asked V. Stiver if she had reached out to Rasmuson for assistance with applying for funding from the Murdock Foundation. V. Stiver replied that she had not but would investigate it.

Ms. Sprinkle asked V. Stiver what her role was with the apartments and organization. V. Stiver explained that she is the on-site property manager who ensures HUD maintenance and performs budgeting, bill-paying, and grant-writing duties. She noted that MSSI's entire board is local, and the units are nice. She noted that they will be short on housing with the growing senior population.

Mayor Pruhs stated that he would make an appointment to visit V. Stiver at the property soon. He stated that he would include this item in the legislative objectives for lobbying when he visits Juneau in February.

Jo Woodward – J. Woodward shared the idea of park-and-ride lots at every main entrance to the City, including Farmers Loop and North Pole, in order to reduce fossil fuels and emissions, which helps combat climate change. She discussed the logistics of park-and-ride endeavors, the benefits thereof, and certain ideal parameters for the facilities she envisions.

Ms. Rogers asked J. Woodward if she had spoken to anyone at the Borough about her idea. J. Woodward stated that she had not but was planning to do so at the next Assembly meeting. **Ms. Rogers** explained that the City could be supportive of such an effort, but it would be in the realm of the Borough to implement. J. Woodward acknowledged the comment, noting that some land for the lots may belong to the City. **Ms. Rogers** suggested that J. Woodward pursue radio stations as a way to get the word out and rally support.

Mr. Marney stated J. Woodward's idea is good but would likely be feasible only in the summer.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA

Mr. Marney, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to APPROVE the agenda and consent agenda.

Ms. Sprinkle requested to pull item 12(b), Resolution No. 5094, from the consent agenda.

Mr. Cleworth requested to pull item 13(b), Memorandum Authorizing Temporary Police Officer, 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 December 11, 2023

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

SPECIAL ORDERS

a) The Fairbanks City Council held a public hearing and considered the following marijuana license application for renewal:

Lic. #	DBA	License Type	Licensee	Address
12325	GOOD Cannabis	Retail Marijuana Store	Good, LLC	356 Old Steese Highway

Mr. Marney, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, 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: Tidwell, Cleworth, Marney, Ringstad, Sprinkle, Rogers

NAYS: None
Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

MAYOR'S COMMENTS AND REPORT

Mayor Pruhs congratulated Chief Cocco and the promoted firefighters. He invited Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Margarita Bell to give a presentation regarding the 2024 budget books.

CFO Bell reported that while the Council had seen most of the 2024 budget documents previously, there were additional details in the budget book worth noting:

- Page 3 – information about the Distinguished Budget Presentation award, which the City has received for 12 consecutive years
- Page 19 – an organizational chart of City governance and management
- Page 21 – a profile of the City with updated demographics and economic data
- Page 27 – a summary of the SWOT analysis and strategic planning that occurred prior to the budget process, including community input through the online budget simulator
- Page 41 – financial policies and summaries of relevant Fairbanks General Code sections
- Page 63 – an update of the long-range plan with financial summaries and a 4-year outlook
- Page 71 – a graph breaking down the City's sources of revenue
- Page 79 – an overview of expenditures by department
- Pages 83-185 – individual departmental budgets
- Page 187 – an overview of the Capital Fund and a list of approved projects for 2024
- Page 203 – historical City data including listings of councilmembers, mayors, City managers, and clerks
- Page 213 – a glossary of terms and acronyms used throughout the budget book.

Mayor Pruhs thanked CFO Bell for her report and thanked V. Buberger for his comments and commitment to keeping the City accountable. He noted that an errant driver had recently struck a control box, resulting in the traffic signals at 1st Avenue and Cushman Street being inoperable. He introduced the Council to the new HR Director, Jake Merritt, and stated that three internal, very capable candidates had been interviewed for the job; he added that he elected not to be involved in the selection process. He shared that the Polaris Working Group is looking to hire a planning consultant to research options for development downtown. He stated the single directive he gave every candidate was the desire to see something special take shape on the site; he noted that this is a rare opportunity for development. He confirmed that the Council will decide what happens to the property and that he will bring a proposal before the body before any money is spent.

COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. Cleworth welcomed J. Merritt. He stated that the City has had many great HR Directors over the years, and he will be held to a high standard. He thanked Clerk Snider for helping draft Resolution No. 5097 with short notice.

Ms. Rogers reported that many meetings had been canceled recently for a variety of reasons but that she had many others scheduled for the coming days. She read an excerpt from a City resolution approved under Mayor Eberhart, recognizing the significance of Martin Luther King Day by

allowing City employees to use part of their workday to attend approved in-service training focused on diversity/cultural awareness or participate in volunteer activities serving those in need.

Ms. Sprinkle welcomed J. Merritt and congratulated the promoted Fairbanks Fire Department (FFD) staff. She indicated that the temporary 4-way stop at Cushman Street and 1st Avenue was working very well, with drivers being efficient and respectful. She praised Public Works for a fantastic snow removal campaign.

Mr. Ringstad asked CFO Bell for clarification on why she was only listed as an authorized signer on one of the accounts referenced in Resolution No. 5096. CFO Bell explained that it is an important component of the segregation of duties for financial matters, noting the prudence of her not being a signer for accounts that she reconciles.

Mr. Marney gave kudos to the FFD for its efforts and growth. He welcomed J. Merritt and indicated that the City made a good decision by hiring him for the job.

Ms. Tidwell echoed pride and support for the FFD promotions and welcomed J. Merritt.

NEW BUSINESS

- a) Resolution No. 5093 – A Resolution Amending the City Schedule of Fees and Charges for Services by Adding Fees for Non-Utility Billing Credit Card and Debit Card Payments. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs and Council Member Marney.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- b) Resolution No. 5094 – A Resolution Authorizing the City of Fairbanks to Participate in the Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs and Council Members Rogers, Cleworth, Marney, and Ringstad.

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to APPROVE Resolution No. 5094.

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

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION NO. 5094 AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Resolution No. 5094 APPROVED.

- c) Resolution No. 5095 – A Resolution Allocating Discretionary Funds from the Room Rental Tax in the Amount of Four Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$400,000). Introduced by Council Member Marney.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- d) Resolution No. 5096 – A Resolution Designating Check Signing Authority for Banking and Investment Accounts of the City of Fairbanks, Alaska. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- e) Resolution No. 5097 – A Resolution in Support of the Moore Street Seniors, Inc. Capital Request to the Alaska State Legislature for Upgrades to the Moore Street Senior Apartments. Introduced by Council Member Cleworth.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- f) Ordinance No. 6271 – An Ordinance Reestablishing the Fairbanks Fire Department Education Reimbursement Program for Recruitment and Retention. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TO THE CITY COUNCIL

- a) Memorandum Regarding Alcohol License Conversion Following Title 4 Rewrite

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- b) Memorandum Authorizing Temporary Police Officer

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to APPROVE the Memorandum Authorizing a Temporary Police Officer.

Mr. Cleworth asked for more details about the temporary position. Deputy Chief Sweet explained that there is an opportunity to bring back an experienced, retired officer to help detectives with the domestic violence (DV) caseload. He stated that the officer would focus on timely follow-up, reports, and interviewing victims, which would help address the significant loss of experience at the Fairbanks Police Department (FPD) from retirements in recent years. He noted that the officer in mind has taught at the academy and has vast expertise in the articulation required for report-writing and documentation. DC Sweet confirmed that the position would be part-time and that having a dedicated investigator working DV cases greatly increases the ability to prosecute crimes.

Mr. Cleworth asked whether the terms of the contract are clearly defined. DC Sweet stated that they are and that they have one detective working in a similar capacity already. He noted that the officer referenced retired under the PERS Tier III system, which outlines parameters for this type of work. He stated that this is also an effort to entice other retired officers to come back and provide support. **Mr. Cleworth** asked how benefits are handled in this situation. CFO Bell explained that according to the contract, the officer will receive an additional 15%, and payment into Social Security will also occur. **Mr. Cleworth** thanked staff for the explanations and shared that the City did this years ago and it was great, until it was shut down. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that other agencies may be using the same approach in the future.

Ms. Sprinkle spoke of the training benefits of the arrangement. DC Sweet agreed that it is a way to build back up the experience levels of the FPD after numerous retirements since 2020.

Mr. Ringstad asked if 29.5 hours a week is the maximum allowed. DC Sweet confirmed and noted an annual limit as well; he added that the contract allows for discretion and flexible scheduling.

Mr. Marney asked if the program is comparable to what occurred in 2023 with Officer Elzey. DC Sweet stated that it is and that a similar arrangement exists with Detective Barnette.

Ms. Rogers discussed the many cold cases that exist and expressed her hope that someone could be brought back to work on those. DC Sweet explained that Detective Barnette is doing just that, and while it may not always make the news, there have been successes already. He cited breakthroughs in older cases, with some now being solved, and the benefit of fresh sets of eyes.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MEMORANDUM AUTHORIZING A TEMPORARY POLICE OFFICER AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Ringstad, Tidwell, Rogers, Sprinkle, Marney, Cleworth
NAYS: None
Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

c) Historic Preservation Commission Meeting Minutes of September 5, 2023

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. Marney reported that the Discretionary Fund Committee would meet the following day.

Ms. Sprinkle discussed a house that burned down around 12th Avenue and Noble Street as well as another incident which involved a death at 109 5th Avenue. She expressed continued concern with safety, as people engage in activities in structures that are unlivable; she added that she wants to make sure abatements stays top-of-mind in 2024. She asked if it was true that the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) had been dissolved. **Ms. Tidwell** confirmed that the DOT had updated the associated route, dissolved the TAC, and was compiling comments from the members. She explained that there will be no more TAC meetings, but the information gathered will be presented through a series of public meetings in the coming months.

Mr. Cleworth recognized the passing of Ms. Carlson who was over 100 years of age, was very much a part of the community, and ran Music Mart for many years with her husband.

Ms. Tidwell, Mr. Ringstad, and Ms. Rogers each indicated that they had no further comments.

Mayor Pruhs reported that the Finance Committee will meet soon and will consider a transfer of funds to the Capital and/or Permanent Funds from the 2023 budget surplus.

CITY CLERK'S REPORT

Clerk Snider stated that her quarterly report will be sent soon and welcomed the new HR Director.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to ENTER an Executive Session to discuss Fairbanks Firefighters Union Labor Negotiation Strategy and *Roberts v. City of Fairbanks, et al.* Litigation.

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

- a) Fairbanks Firefighters Union Labor Negotiation Strategy (entered at 7:33 p.m.)
- b) *Roberts v. City of Fairbanks, et al.* litigation (entered at 7:43 p.m.)

Mr. Cleworth brought the City Council out of the Executive Sessions noting that the Council met in Executive Sessions on the above items and provided direction to the negotiating team and legal counsel, respectively, and no action was taken.

The regular meeting resumed at 8:22 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Hearing no objection, **Mayor Pruhs** declared the meeting adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

DAVID PRUHS, MAYOR

ATTEST:

D. DANYELLE SNIDER, MMC, CITY CLERK

Transcribed by: CC