



FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, JANUARY 22, 2024  
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 for a Permanent Fund Review Board Annual Report, to conduct a Regular Meeting of the Fairbanks City Council via Zoom webinar and at the City Council Chambers, 800 Cushman Street, Fairbanks, Alaska, with Mayor David Pruhs presiding and with the following Council Members in attendance:

Councilmembers Present:        Jerry Cleworth, Seat A  
    June Rogers, Seat B  
    Crystal Tidwell, Seat D  
    Lonny Marney, Seat E  
    John Ringstad, Seat F

Absent:                                Sue Sprinkle, Seat C

Also Present:                        D. Danyielle Snider, City Clerk  
    Thomas Chard, City Attorney  
    Margarita Bell, Chief Financial Officer  
    Michael Sanders, Chief of Staff  
    Kristi Merideth, FECC Manager (remotely)  
    Jake Merritt, HR Director  
    Ron Dupee, Police Chief  
    Rick Sweet, Deputy Police Chief  
    Nate Warner, Police Captain  
    Kent Zheng, Police Officer  
    Andrew Coccaro, Fire Chief  
    Brynn Butler, Housing Coordinator  
    Colt Chase, Deputy City Clerk

**INVOCATION**

The invocation was given by City Clerk Danyielle Snider.

**FLAG SALUTATION**

At the request of Mayor Pruhs, **Ms. Tidwell** led the flag salutation.

**CEREMONIAL MATTERS**

Police Chief Dupee introduced Officer Kent Zheng, a recent lateral transfer to FPD, and discussed his recent work in the retail theft program with local businesses. Deputy Police Chief Sweet administered the Oath of Office to Officer Zheng.

## 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.]*

Arlette Eagle-Lavelle, Lavelle's Taphouse owner – A. Eagle-Lavelle stated that she has had a front row seat to the demolition work of the Polaris Building annex this past year and is excited to own a business on what will be prime real estate, next to a prestigious development, once the Polaris Building tower is demolished in the coming year. She expressed frustration that the Mayor declined her request to meet and stated that she wanted to share her experience and take notes on what to expect for the next phase. A. Eagle-Lavelle stated she was instructed to direct any comments or concerns to the Engineering Department, which she did. She reported that she received no follow-up other than an initial reply, which stated they would forward her comments to the appropriate parties. She explained that she began writing weekly emails to the City Engineer and owner of the building adjacent to hers, asking for details on plans for the next phase of demolition so that she could determine the potential impact on her business operations, such as parking, building access, outdoor space, and more. A. Eagle-Lavelle reported having to turn down requests for future event reservations due to the uncertainty and that stated that vital and long-term employees have indicated that, if the forecast for 2024 questionable or is similar to 2023, they will not be able to continue to work for her due to a significant drop in tip-based income. She shared her feelings of desperation as a City resident and taxpaying owner of businesses and homes, at not being able to get anyone to talk to her. She stated she is asking for help with how to proceed.

**Ms. Rogers** asked if A. Eagle-Lavelle could be provided with additional time to speak. **Mayor Pruhs** cited the rules for Citizens' Comments, reminding Ms. Rogers that she may only ask follow-up questions at this time.

**Mr. Cleworth** asked A. Eagle-Lavelle if she had communicated with anyone in the last two weeks. A. Eagle-Lavelle stated that earlier that day the owners shared information they had just received.

**Mr. Marney** asked A. Eagle-Lavelle to copy the Council on future correspondence; she agreed.

Victor Buberger – V. Buberger indicated that some streetlights are still not working on the Old Steese Highway after five months of him reporting about it. He talked about the potholes that will likely appear in the coming months and encouraged the City to explore options that will result in longer-lasting repairs. He stated that snow removal efforts have been good, and he hopes the City will continue to ensure sidewalks stay cleared so individuals do not walk in the streets.

Scott McCrea, President/CEO of Explore Fairbanks – S. McCrea referenced Ordinance No. 6269, which would require his organization to provide salary details and financial statements, reviewed by an accountant, to the City. He stated that Explore Fairbanks supports the ordinance and affirmed the organization's commitment to fiduciary responsibility. He explained the challenges in recent years with getting accounting services but stated that, after an RFP process, Explore Fairbanks has chosen Wilson and Wilson to perform a complete audit for 2023 and a financial review of 2021 and 2022. He noted that a 2020 audit is also nearing completion by another accounting firm, that all items should be finished by April, and that they will keep the Council apprised of their progress.



Brynn Butler, Housing Coordinator, City of Fairbanks – B. Butler reported that the grant-funded Ray of Hope program has helped prevent homelessness for seven families thus far, with \$21,000 of the total \$75,000 utilized and a deadline of March 8 to spend the remaining funds. She shared that another 11 families are being reviewed for assistance. She gave details on the upcoming Project Homeless Connect, where over 20 agencies will provide services to those in need.

David van den Berg, Downtown Association of Fairbanks Executive Director – D. van den Berg provided a copy of the 2023 Annual Report for downtown Fairbanks which also included a list of 2023 donors. He highlighted the Downtown Association's financial partnership with the City through the Association's contributions, totaling over \$110,000, to the Emergency Service Patrol (ESP) which focuses on responding to the intensive needs of chronically inebriated individuals year-round. He acknowledged the Council's support of the downtown area through efforts such as the increased bed tax funding and a dedicated law enforcement presence in the Golden Heart Plaza.

**Mr. Cleworth** spoke about the past struggles to obtain financial support through donations and asked if it seems to be getting any easier. D. van den Berg indicated that there is regular turnover with some smaller donors but indicated that there are major contributions from consistent entities.

**Mr. Marney** asked D. van den Berg if he is aware of any staffing updates for the ESP. D. van den Berg stated that he is not but that he will ask the ESP's ambassador.

Hearing no more requests for comment, **Mayor Pruhs** declared Citizens' Comments closed.

**Mayor Pruhs** discussed the importance of abiding by the rules for Citizens' Comments when a citizen is speaking and their time elapses and reiterated the need to be consistent.

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA**

**Mr. Ringstad**, seconded by **Mr. Cleworth**, moved to APPROVE the Agenda.

**Mayor Pruhs** asked if any Councilmembers wished to pull any item from the consent agenda for discussion and heard none.

**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.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

a) Regular Meeting Minutes of December 18, 2023

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA.

**SPECIAL ORDERS**

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

Lic. #	DBA	License Type	Licensee	Address
5051	Asiana Restaurant	Restaurant/Eating Place	Young Mi Jin	2001 Airport Way

**Mr. Marney**, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to WAIVE PROTEST on the alcohol 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 ALCOHOL LICENSE APPLICATION FOR RENEWAL AS FOLLOWS:

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

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

Lic. #	DBA	License Type	Licensee	Address
10278	GoodSinse, LLC	Retail Marijuana Store	GoodSinse, LLC	2604 Davis Road
10279	GoodSinse, LLC	Standard Marijuana Cultivation Facility	GoodSinse, LLC	2604 Davis Road
14874	GoodSinse, LLC	Marijuana Product Manufacturing Facility	GoodSinse, LLC	2604 Davis Road
26251	GoodSinse, LLC	Retail Marijuana Store	GoodSinse, LLC	29 College Road, Ste 8C
16006	Arctic Bakery, LLC	Marijuana Product Manufacturing Facility	Arctic Bakery, LLC	1409 Well Street

**Mr. Ringstad**, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to WAIVE PROTEST on the marijuana license applications 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 APPLICATIONS FOR RENEWAL AS FOLLOWS:

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



## MAYOR'S COMMENTS AND REPORT

**Mayor Pruhs** invited Aldean Kilbourn and Dusty Spencer forward to address the Council. A. Kilbourn introduced herself as the Chair of the Clay Street Cemetery Commission and commended D. Spencer for his exemplary work in the summer of 2023, leading a group of volunteers to assist with the placement of markers at the Clay Street Cemetery. She shared that it typically takes two volunteers about an hour and a half to complete the work associated with placing one 60-pound marker, but on a particular workday, with the assistance of D. Spencer and his crew, they were able to place 47 markers in only three hours. A. Kilbourn reported that they were able to complete 163 markers last summer thanks to not only volunteers performing physical labor, but also Commission members spending a great deal of time doing research to gather data on buried individuals whose gravesites are not yet marked in detail. She noted that 47 markers are on order, paid for with funds allocated in January 2023, and with the recent bed tax grant award amount, another 40 could be ordered. A. Kilbourn explained that the Commission had requested \$10,000, via the Public Works Director, during the 2024 budget process with hopes to order an additional 34 markers. She indicated that the request was denied at the time, which puts the Commission in a situation where they will have many names researched and ready but no more funding to purchase markers. She shared that there are over 500 graves left to mark and research continues year-round.

**Mayor Pruhs** explained that D. Spencer is associated with the Air National Guard Refueling Wing at Eielson Air Force Base. He stated that D. Spencer called him last summer with a request for community service opportunities at the City for members of his unit, which led to an introduction to A. Kilbourn and the Clay Street Cemetery Commission. **Mayor Pruhs** acknowledged that the Council initially declined the request for \$10,000 in the budget with the intent to revisit the issue in early 2024 but stated that he first wanted to highlight the volunteer efforts that drive the work at the cemetery, both through labor and research. He asked how many markers they were hoping to complete in 2024. A. Kilbourn responded that with current funding, they can accomplish 87, but if the \$10,000 request is granted, it would total 117. She noted that if they continue to receive funds, they can anticipate completing an average of 100 each year. She stated they will soon reach a point where every grave with available data is marked.

**Mr. Ringstad** asked how many total graves are at the cemetery and how many would be considered done. A. Kilbourn stated there are over 2,500 gravesites and, in the past, only one person would work on placing markers and would complete about 25 each summer. She explained that the work has significantly increased with the help of other Commission members like Janet Richardson and Amy Stratman, as well as volunteer laborers such as D. Spencer's group. **Mayor Pruhs** shared his experience with placing markers. **Mr. Ringstad** asked how many graves are left to be marked and explained that he is trying to understand the amount of long-term funding needed for this important project. A. Kilbourn indicated that there are still 522 unmarked graves with associated names that they are aware of and a fair number of unknown graves. She shared that a lot of the work is tied to research, sometimes as much as 40 hours in a single week looking into a one name. She explained that the funds received through the bed tax grant are helpful but are not enough to keep up with the number names ready to be completed and the volunteer labor willing to be contributed. **Mayor Pruhs** added that for the last 10-12 years, they could only manage to complete 20-40 markers a year, so having the ability to finish over 100 per year is significant, especially considering how many local organizations have no records to contribute to the



identification of those buried at the cemetery. He shared some additional history of the cemetery and the recordkeeping over the last 50 years.

D. Spencer shared his experience in volunteering, the pride his group members felt by contributing to the endeavor, and the benefit of learning more about the history of the community. He reported the joy his crew expressed as they took time to talk to Commission members and better understand the roots in Fairbanks. He stated that they look forward to helping in the future.

**Ms. Rogers** asked if the Commission's current request was for \$10,000. **Mayor Pruhs** indicated that an ordinance would be put together for the Council's consideration. **Ms. Rogers** expressed her appreciation for the report and stated her willingness to seek a way to ensure ongoing funding while the Commission works through the remaining sites that need marked at the cemetery.

### **COUNCIL MEMBERS' COMMENTS**

**Mr. Cleworth** asked if it was the Mayor's intention to include the request for \$10,000 in the first 2024 budget amendment. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that he is not sure yet but would take input from the Council. CFO Bell reported that the first Council meeting in February will likely include the first 2024 budget amendment. She explained that the 2023 end-of-year financial tasks will be completed by the end of January, and the Council will need a budget amendment to adjust for any encumbrances. **Mr. Cleworth** requested that the \$10,000 allocation be included in that budget amendment.

**Mr. Cleworth** pointed out that with the Council's approval of Resolution No. 5099, the City will be purchasing a new motor grader. He explained that it is a much bigger deal than it may appear, because 23 years ago the City would not have been able to purchase such large equipment outright, nor have funds for things like grave markers. He shared how significant it is, that past Councils saw the wisdom in establishing a dedicated Capital Fund, especially after financial support from Juneau began to drastically drop. **Mayor Pruhs** noted that the Public Works Director also managed to make the purchase for about \$43,000 less than what was budgeted.

**Mr. Cleworth** spoke of the earlier work session where the Council heard a report and historical highlights of the City's Permanent Fund. He recalled the strict structure in place at the Fund's inception, when the City could not afford to gamble with investments, and how that has loosened up over the years as the Fund has grown. He stated that the City now relies heavily on the Permanent Fund each year, which at times can be concerning. He pointed out how the Fund has also created a varied revenue stream for the City and that property taxes account for only about 34% of the City's revenue. He shared having recently read that property taxes are the primary revenue source for the Borough. He concluded by expressing appreciation for the report that had been given and stated how incredibly successful the City's Permanent Fund has been. He stated that if it did not exist, the City would need to come up with about \$6MM a year elsewhere.

**Ms. Rogers** expressed joy in seeing the new lateral-hire police officer. She mentioned that the Fairbanks Diversity Council (FDC) is going strong and will hold a special gathering in February. She stated she continues to serve on four separate committees focused on community needs such as housing, and work is being done to engage with legislators to advocate for Fairbanks. She shared

that she often turns on KTOO to watch the video feed of what is happening in Juneau. She reported that Yuri Morgan, the City's lobbyist, is keeping the Council well-informed of what transpires in the Capital, and the Legislative Committee meets regularly. She discussed the overall cultural umbrella of the community and how the Clay Street Cemetery is a good example of that.

**Ms. Tidwell** stated that she also watches the KTOO feed to see for herself the things that Interior representatives are engaged in on behalf of constituents and to have better context on the news that is reported. She shared that State elected officials are very approachable and are grateful for feedback. She welcomed the new police officer and expressed appreciation in learning more about the Clay Street Cemetery and the work of the Commission.

**Mr. Marney** commended the Fairbanks Police Department (FPD) for their efforts regarding staffing, by promoting the incentives the Council passed in 2023 and seeking support from retired officers to return to work in focused capacities. He expressed pride in having the opportunity to be a part of that work to help give the FPD the tools it needs to fill its ranks.

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

**Mayor Pruhs** thanked HR Director Merritt for attending the meeting and noted that the first two weeks in his new role have been very active.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- a) Ordinance No. 6271 – An Ordinance Reestablishing the Fairbanks Fire Department Education Reimbursement Program for Recruitment and Retention. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

**Mr. Cleworth**, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6271.

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

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6271 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Ringstad, Rogers, Cleworth, Marney, Tidwell

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Sprinkle

**Mayor Pruhs** declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6271 ADOPTED.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

- a) Resolution No. 5098 – A Resolution Amending the City Schedule of Fees and Charges for Services by Adjusting Ambulance Service Fees. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

PASSED and APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA.



- b) Resolution No. 5099 – A Resolution Awarding a Contract to NC Machinery Company to Provide a Motor Grader in the Amount of \$432,119. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

PASSED and APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA.

- c) Ordinance No. 6272 – An Ordinance Amending the Collective Bargaining Agreement Between the City of Fairbanks and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 1547. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

ADVANCED on the CONSENT AGENDA.

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

- a) Clay Street Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes of November 1, 2023

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA.

- b) Memorandum Authorizing Temporary Firefighter

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS AND COUNCIL MEMBERS' COMMENTS**

**Mr. Ringstad** referenced the earlier Permanent Fund Review Board meeting and stated they will continue to focus on long-term sustainability so the Fund can remain a stable revenue source. **Mayor Pruhs** thanked Mr. Ringstad for his work on the board and affirmed the importance of continuity of individuals serving on this and other working groups, citing the length of time those who oversee the investments have been associated with the City's account. He repeated that continuity in management and oversight is what makes the City's Permanent Fund a success.

**Mr. Marney** expressed appreciation and support for Mr. Ringstad's work on the Permanent Fund Review Board. He reported that the recent wrap-up meeting of the Discretionary Fund Committee was productive, resulting in some adjustments to the grant application. He explained the Committee's goal of making the application more user-friendly and easier to complete. He noted how painful it is to reject submissions due to application issues and shared that the Committee will have another meeting in February to finalize changes.

**Ms. Tidwell** and **Ms. Rogers** indicated that they had no reports or additional comments.

**Mr. Cleworth** noted that advanced Ordinance No. 6272 represents an important step in removing the Deputy City Clerk II position from the IBEW bargaining unit. He explained that was something the City had wanted to accomplish for years but had never been successful in, and he commended those who made it possible. **Mayor Pruhs** acknowledged Chief of Staff Sanders as the person who deserves credit for the change.



**CITY CLERK'S REPORT**

City Clerk Snider indicated that the Council has been provided her 2023 4th quarter report. She shared that registration is now open for the 2nd Annual Citizen Engagement Academy.

**CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT**

City Attorney Chard indicated that he had no report and thanked Councilmembers for their service.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

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

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

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

- a) Fairbanks Firefighters Union Labor Negotiation Strategy (*entered at 7:40 p.m.*)

**Mr. Cleworth** brought the City Council out of the Executive Session noting that the City Council met in Executive Session to discuss FFU Labor Negotiation Strategy. He stated that direction was given to the negotiating team, and no action was taken.

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

**ADJOURNMENT**

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

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

**Mayor Pruhs** declared the meeting adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

  
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DAVID PRUHS, MAYOR

ATTEST:

  
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D. DANIELLE SNIDER, MMC, CITY CLERK

Transcribed by: CC