



DISCRETIONARY FUND COMMITTEE
WRAP-UP MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 19, 2022, 12:00 P.M.
HELD VIA TELECONFERENCE AND AT
FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
800 CUSHMAN STREET, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA



The Discretionary Fund Committee convened at 12:00 p.m. on the above date to conduct a Wrap-up Meeting at the City Council Chambers, 800 Cushman Street, Fairbanks, Alaska and via teleconference with Chair Lonny Marney (Seat F) presiding and with the following members in attendance:

Members Present: Katheryn Fitzgerald, Seat A
 Samantha Kirstein, Seat C
 Traci Gatewood, Seat D (remotely)

Members Absent: Ron Woolf, Seat B
 Rachael Kvapil, Seat E

Also Present: D. Danyielle Snider, City Clerk
 Margarita Bell, Chief Financial Officer

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

a) Distribution Meeting Minutes of December 20, 2021

Ms. Kirstein, seconded by **Ms. Fitzgerald**, moved to APPROVE the Meeting Minutes of December 20, 2021.

Ms. Fitzgerald stated that the name of the basketball organization on page one should be corrected to read, "Interior Youth Basketball Association." The correction was noted by the Clerk.

Ms. Gatewood stated that the spelling of her first name on page one should be corrected. The Clerk noted the correction.

With no objection, the minutes were APPROVED, as corrected.

PUBLIC COMMENT (limited to three minutes)

No members of the public provided comments.

NEW BUSINESS

a) Review of Discretionary Fund Grant Application and Committee Process

Ms. Gatewood stated that because so many applicants were disqualified in the recent grant process, she hoped there could be a Q&A session for applicants implemented prior to the grant

deadline. She suggested that the Committee also develop some type of FAQ document to help applicants avoid common mistakes in their grant applications. She stated that the application asks applicants how they plan to promote or enhance tourism or contribute to economic growth, but it does not ask to what degree they plan to do so. She suggested a possible modification to that portion of the application. **Ms. Gatewood** stated that she is open to a discussion on a potential appeals process, but she would like to head things off before an appeal process is needed. She stated she would like to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to be considered for funding and not be disqualified before they are given a chance.

Ms. Kirstein expressed agreement with Ms. Gatewood's comments. She distributed a memo she had written with some suggestions to improve the process. She stated the basic idea is to implement a mandatory meeting prior to the grant application period, and she read aloud a paragraph from the memo. **Ms. Kirstein** stated that another idea is to make the purpose of the grant clearer to applicants before they apply, and she read aloud another portion of her memo. She spoke also to the limited amount of funds available for the Discretionary Grant. She expressed appreciation for Mr. Woolf's prior comments in favor of keeping the process simple, but she stated that the Committee needs to be clear with its guidelines. She stated that if an appeal process comes about, it should be a training tool – not just a duel with winners and losers. She stated that she is open to more discussion about the issue.

Chair Marney commented that if issues are headed off up front, an appeal process may not be needed.

Ms. Kirstein gave commendations to Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Margarita Bell for all her work and stated that she is an asset to the process and to the City. She suggested that perhaps applicants could send a copy of their draft application to CFO Bell for review before formally submitting it to the Clerk's Office.

Ms. Fitzgerald stated that the application process has been so simplified, she does not know how it could be simpler. She attributed many of the application errors to carelessness. She stated that the application contains a shaded box with a checklist of all the requirements. She stated that she has mixed feelings about offering training to applicants and shared that she did not want to require more time of City staff. **Ms. Fitzgerald** pointed out that several of the organizations that were disqualified were not new to the Discretionary Grant process and stated that she would not be opposed to providing applicants with some FAQs. She commented that offering a training session will likely generate more applicants and clarified that is not a bad thing, but there is still only \$270,000 total dollars to distribute. **Ms. Fitzgerald** spoke about how local organizations interact with the Fairbanks Convention and Visitors Bureau (d/b/a Explore Fairbanks), and she spoke about the funding the City allocates to the FCVB each year. **Ms. Fitzgerald** reiterated that there needs to be more effort and diligence on the part of the applicant to submit a complete application, and she spoke in opposition to allowing applicants to submit a draft for review. She shared some personal experiences she had with the Discretionary Fund process as an applicant. She shared that she is not in favor of an appeal process because the process is already very simple. **Ms. Fitzgerald** explained how the requirement on the application regarding miscellaneous income and expenses came about two years prior. She stated that applicants that were rejected will not make the same

mistakes again. She reiterated that she is against creating an appeal process, but she supports training, if necessary.

CFO Bell stated that she liked several of the members' comments and suggestions. She explained that she tries not to put the City in the position of responsibility in regard to the materials submitted with applications. She stated that City staff could do a Q&A session about two weeks before the application deadline to help applicants avoid common mistakes. CFO Bell indicated that it is likely something that could be done in about an hour and would not take a lot of staff time; she added that it would not change the grant process. **Ms. Fitzgerald** asked whether City staff or Committee members would handle the Q&A session. CFO Bell recommended that the Committee stay away from the Q&A process to avoid conflicts of interest; she stated that the Finance Department would handle it. **Ms. Fitzgerald** asked how many inquiries CFO Bell receives during an application period. CFO Bell stated that she usually receives calls from 2 or 3 different agencies, but some agencies call multiple times. **Ms. Fitzgerald** stated that she would not want to spend time telling someone how to write their grant application. She asked Ms. Bell whether she would still take such calls if the Q&A session was implemented. CFO Bell replied that she would still take calls from applicants. **Ms. Fitzgerald** agreed that a Q&A session should be separated from the Committee.

Ms. Kirstein, second by **Ms. Gatewood**, moved to add a Q&A session prior to the grant application deadline.

Chair Marney called for objection to the motion to add a Q&A session and, hearing none, declared the motion PASSED.

In response to a question about how potential applicants would be notified of the Q&A session, Clerk Snider stated that the information would be included in the application guidelines, on the City's website, and in the published public notice for the Discretionary Fund Grant.

b) Review of Discretionary Fund Committee Policies and Procedures

Members did not discuss or make any changes to the Committee's Policies and Procedures.

NEXT MEETING

Chair Marney opened the floor to suggestions for a November 2022 Preliminary Meeting date. **Ms. Fitzgerald** stated that she will no longer be on the Committee at that time. It was agreed by all members that the Clerk would send a Doodle Poll out to members in August to determine the best date to meet in November.

Ms. Fitzgerald asked whether there had been any discussion at the City Council level about increasing the amount of the Discretionary Fund; she asked also about the process to do so. CFO Bell stated that an ordinance would be required to make such a change, which would take two readings before the City Council. She clarified that it would not have to wait to be done during a budget process, but if an ordinance to increase the amount was passed, a budget amendment would have to follow.

Chair Marney stated that he is not planning to wait until September to introduce something; he stated, however, that he has more work to do on the item.

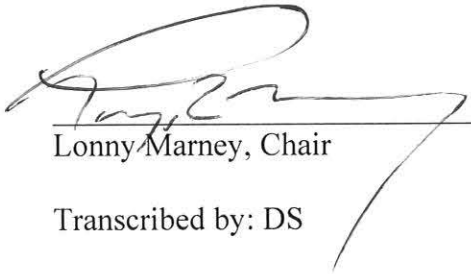
Ms. Gatewood asked whether she could drop off her copies of application packets to the City Clerk's Office to be destroyed; Clerk Snider replied that she could.

Mr. Marney personally thanked Committee members for their hard work and service, and specifically mentioned Ms. Fitzgerald and Mr. Woolf whose terms would expire over the summer.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Kirstein, seconded by **Ms. Fitzgerald**, moved to ADJOURN the meeting.

Chair Marney called for objection and hearing none, declared the meeting ADJOURNED at 12:45 p.m.



Lonny Marney, Chair



Diana Hebel, Deputy City Clerk I

Transcribed by: DS