



DISCRETIONARY FUND COMMITTEE  
PRELIMINARY MEETING  
NOVEMBER 8, 2023, 10:00 A.M.  
HELD VIA TELECONFERENCE AND AT  
FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
800 CUSHMAN STREET, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA



The Discretionary Fund Committee convened at 10:00 a.m. on the above date to conduct a Preliminary 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: Karen Blackburn, Seat A (arrived at 10:01 a.m.)  
Samantha Kirstein, Seat C  
Traci Gatewood, Seat D

Also Present: Diana Hebel, Deputy City Clerk I  
Margarita Bell, Chief Financial Officer  
Sarah Fuerst, Grants Administrator

Absent: *Vacant*, Seat B  
Rachael Kvapil, Seat E

**APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES**

a) Approval of Meeting Minutes – January 11, 2023

**Ms. Kirstein**, seconded by **Ms. Gatewood**, moved to APPROVE the meeting minutes.

With no objection heard, the minutes were APPROVED.

**NEW BUSINESS**

a) Report from Chair Marney

**Chair Marney** stated that choosing this year's recipients will be a challenge but one that everyone is looking forward to. He explained that this is the Committee's chance to go over its policies and procedures and set dates for the presentation and distribution meetings.

b) Committee Policies and Procedures (tardiness, absences, presentation format, etc.)

*Policies and Procedures were initially skipped and, in part, addressed later in the meeting.*

c) Financial Report by Margarita Bell, Chief Financial Officer

Ms. Bell noted that the Discretionary Grant Fund allocation had recently increased from \$270,000 to \$400,000. She updated the Committee regarding last year's distribution: Fairbanks Racing

Lions returned all their awarded funds, and Fairbanks Tired Iron did not submit a financial report, although the organization did not apply for the 2023 grant.

Ms. Bell introduced Sarah Fuerst, Grants Administrator, who she stated will be working with her and taking over her role in the Discretionary Grant process next year.

Ms. Bell stated that she completed the grant application review process and explained that she will go over deficiencies one application at a time. She stated that the Committee will make its decision on whether an applicant will be allowed to continue based on the review of the application; she added that she would reveal names of the organizations once she is finishing presenting her review.

There was a question as to whether Tom Alexander, a not-yet-confirmed appointee to the Committee, would be allowed to vote. It was determined that he would be allowed only to ask questions until his appointment was confirmed by the City Council.

The list of deficiencies was reported to the Committee by Ms. Bell, and the Committee voted on whether to allow each applicant to continue in the process after each was read. Members discussed and agreed that since the rules were clearly written on the application, no exceptions could be made and that the Committee must uphold a standard.

After hearing each deficiency and having discussed each with the understanding that no exceptions would be made, all were voted unanimously against. **Ms. Gatewood** expressed that she is hopeful that the organizations that find themselves ineligible will next year pay more attention to detail. She hoped that if they had questions, they would use the services available to them.

Ms. Bell revealed the names of the disqualified organizations:

- North Pole Community Chamber of Commerce (did not provide a balance sheet or income & expense statement for August or September)
- Fairbanks Children’s Museum (did not include proof of use of the Discretionary Fund Grant logo)
- Georgeson Botanical Garden Friends (other income totaled 10% or more of organization’s current year income, and there was no detailed listing or explanation of other income as required by the application)
- Northland Youth Choir (other income totaled 10% or more of organization’s current year expense, and there was no detailed listing or explanation of other expense as required by the application)
- University of Alaska Museum of the North (provided a profit and loss statement in place of the required balance sheet for the current year)
- Alaska Songbird Institute (failed to provide a copy of the annual report and proof of use of the Discretionary Fund logo)
- Literacy Council of Alaska (failed to provide a copy of the annual report, proof of use of the Discretionary Fund logo, and financial statements for August or September)
- World I.C.E. Association – T/S Ice Alaska (did not include proof of use of the Discretionary Fund logo)



**Ms. Kirstein** stated she has seen I.C.E. Alaska use the logo everywhere except in their application. She also asked whether agencies outside of the city should be allowed to receive funds. Ms. Bell replied that it is up to those outside agencies to prove to the Committee that they provide economic development in the City of Fairbanks, and it is up to the Committee to decide on funding.

**Ms. Kirstein** asked about agencies that apply for funds to help them with things like building projects. Ms. Bell explained that organizations that apply outside of the usual reasons are still allowed to apply, but it is up to the Committee to decide whether they qualify for funds.

d) Format of Presentations – to Zoom or not to Zoom

**Ms. Kirstein** stated it is preferable that people attend in-person, if possible, but that Zoom should be an option. **Chair Marney** agreed and asked how to express that to presenters.

**Ms. Gatewood** stated she would like to make sure people understood that there would be no bias or penalty if a participant could only attend via Zoom.

**Chair Marney** asked if the Clerk had any ideas on how to word the request. Clerk Hebel suggested that the rules could state that participants should make every effort to attend in person, whenever possible.

#### **COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS**

**Ms. Kirstein** expressed a little heart sickness for those applicants that have been disqualified, especially I.C.E. Alaska. She stated that I.C.E. Alaska is a primary event and one that the Committee would like to support.

**Ms. Gatewood** stated she appreciates the process of hearing the issue before knowing the name of the organization; she stated that keeps the Committee true to the process. She stated that she knows a lot of the applicants do good work for the community, and she has seen logo used around town.

#### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING** – Presentation and Distribution meeting dates TBD by Committee

**Chair Marney** brought it to the Committee’s attention that one of the applicants would be out of town December 5 – 11; he added that Committee member Rachael Kvapil would be unavailable on December 8.

Clerk Snider briefly entered the meeting and cautioned the Committee on adjusting its meeting schedule according to the schedule of any applicant. She stated that would set a precedent. She pointed out that applicants may appoint a different presenter or attend via Zoom.

After some deliberation, the Committee decided on the following dates and times:

- Presentation Meeting – December 1, 2023, at 5:30 p.m.
- Distribution Meeting – December 13, 2023, at 12:00 p.m.

**Chair Marney** asked if there were any other comments.

**Ms. Kirstein** thanked Chair Marney for his work in getting more grant funds for distribution.

**Chair Marney** mentioned the presentation and Q&A time limits as written in the policies and procedures. He stated he thinks that the presentation time limit should remain at three minutes but that perhaps each Committee member should get two minutes for Q&A.

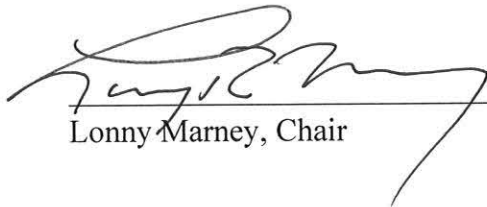
**Ms. Gatewood** asked for clarification that each member would get two minutes for Q&A. She pointed out that allowing such could extend the Q&A for each organization to twelve minutes, given that there are six Committee members. She suggested that the overall Q&A time period be extended instead.

Clerk Hebel stated that Clerk Snider suggested limiting the applicants' response time to 1 minute per question. Ms. Bell suggested that each applicant's total presentation and Q&A period be limited to 10 minutes.

It was decided that ten minutes total time, including the three-minute presentation time, would be given to each applicant, which would allow for up to seven minutes for Q&A.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

**Chair Marney** declared the meeting ADJOURNED at 10:43 a.m.

  
Lonny Marney, Chair

  
Diana Hebel, Deputy City Clerk I

Transcribed by: DH