



FAIRBANKS DIVERSITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
NOVEMBER 12, 2019 – 5:30 P.M.
FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
800 CUSHMAN STREET, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA



The **Fairbanks Diversity Council (FDC)** convened at 5:30 p.m. on the above date to conduct a Regular Meeting at the City Council Chambers, 800 Cushman Street, Fairbanks, Alaska, with Mayor Jim Matherly presiding and with the following members in attendance:

Members Present: Kennita Williams, Seat A David Rucker, Seat G
Robert Dorton, Seat B Jeff Walters, Seat H
Montean Jackson, Seat C Kelvin Lee, Seat I
Juanita Webb, Seat D (telephonic) Doug Toelle, Seat J (arrived at 5:42 p.m.)
Shelissa Thomas, Seat E Sara Harriger, Seat K
Rita Davis, Seat F June Rogers, City Council Member

Members Absent: Angela Foster-Snow, HR Director

Also Present: D. Danyielle Snider, City Clerk Nancy Reeder, Police Chief

CALL TO ORDER & READING OF THE FDC MISSION STATEMENT

Chair Matherly called the meeting to order and read the FDC Mission Statement.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Matherly asked everyone to join him in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Ms. Thomas, seconded by **Mr. Rucker**, moved to APPROVE the Agenda.

Chair Matherly called for objection to APPROVING the Agenda, as Amended, and, hearing none, so ORDERED.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS (Limited to 3 Minutes)

Reverend Leslie Ahuvah Fails, 285 Rainbow Ridge Road, Fairbanks – Rev. Fails expressed support and appreciation for the work of the FDC. She stated she represents the Unitarian Church, which serves many queer and transgender people. She stated it has been a rough year nationally and locally. She expressed concern over the recent change in the makeup of the FDC and emphasized the importance of the FDC's work. She stated she applied to serve on the FDC in early October, and she spoke in support of having more religious representation on the FDC.

Frank Turney, 1434 Lacey Street, B, Fairbanks – Mr. Turney stated he has been attending FDC meetings for a few years. He spoke about the *Batson v. Kentucky* Supreme Court case regarding

the dismissal of jurors without valid cause based solely on race. Mr. Turney stated he is seeking a resolution in support of data collection in jury selection to ensure the courts are complying. He thanked Mayor Matherly for his Proclamation on Veterans Day and stated that American Indian veterans have the highest record of military service.

Mr. Walters asked Mr. Turney who should be asked to collect the data. Mr. Turney replied that it should be asked of the state legislature and possibly to U.S. Senators Murkowski and Sullivan.

Ms. Rogers stated that Mr. Turney has been working on the issue for a number of years; she asked whether any other states have a good model to follow. Mr. Turney stated there are other states that collect data, but he does not have that information with him. He stated that over 150 Alaska Native villages opt out of jury duty.

Ms. Thomas asked Mr. Turney what kind of data he hopes can be gathered. Mr. Turney stated that if three minorities are removed from jury selection, prosecutors must show cause. He indicated that there is a serious problem with the court system, and he wants to ensure the “Batson Challenge” is not being violated. He stated he would like to know whether they show cause for removing minorities from juries.

Ms. Jackson asked whether there is any information indicating that the process is not being followed. She asked whether there is a committee that oversees jury selection. Mr. Turney stated there is no committee in place, but legislators could form one.

Chair Matherly stated he is working with City Attorney Paul Ewers on a letter or a resolution to present to the City Council encouraging the state to collect data.

Mr. Turney referenced a Mississippi Supreme Court case that was recently overturned due to racial discrimination.

Hearing no more requests for comment, **Chair Matherly** declared Citizens’ Comments closed.

MAYOR’S COMMENTS & REPORT

a) Introduction of New Members

Chair Matherly introduced new members Bobby Dorton and Kennita Williams and asked them to tell everyone a little about themselves.

Mr. Dorton stated he is originally from Northway, and he grew up with traditions and was taught about his culture. He stated he moved to Fairbanks in 2004 for all the wrong reasons and was involved with drugs until he hit rock bottom in 2013. He shared that he was sentenced 11 years in jail for selling heroin. He explained that while he was incarcerated, he received some treatment. He stated that they asked him about the effects he had on others, but he could not see the effects because he had been a selfish person. He stated they threw him out of the class twice, but finally he acknowledged the effects he had on others, particularly on his children, and it was a turning point for him. **Mr. Dorton** stated that today he advocates for recovery in the community. He

stated that now he makes connections by looking for what he can give instead of what he can get. **Mr. Dorton** stated he works at Ralph Purdue and works closely with Re-entry Coalition. He stated he is all about tradition and culture, but he is also about recovery. He stated that he wants to see Fairbanks become a recovery community, and he stated that everyone has been touched by addiction in some way.

Ms. Williams stated she has lived in Fairbanks for five years, and she came by way of the U.S. Air Force. She stated her husband is now retired, and they stayed because they fell in love with Fairbanks. She stated she is a senior paralegal, and she worked with the legal team at Eielson Air Force Base (EAFB) for four years. She stated she worked as a victim liaison, and she has dealt with many domestic violence issues. **Ms. Williams** stated her heart cries for things that are happening right in front of her, and she wants to be a voice for change and help others. She stated she became Spouse of the Year for EAFB, which opened other doors in the community. She stated she is now working on the legislative side with Senator Murkowski.

Chair Matherly welcomed both Mr. Dorton and Ms. Williams.

- b) Changes to FDC Membership/Make-up (City Ordinance No. 6114) and Future FDC Work Session

Chair Matherly referenced the signed copy of City Ordinance No. 6114 in the agenda packet. He informed members that the FDC membership has been reduced to 11 voting members. **Chair Matherly** stated that this time of year when it is dark and cold outside can be difficult for people. He shared that RI International, or RI Consulting, is considering putting up a mobile rehab unit in Fairbanks to go directly to people in need. He stated the program would be grant-funded, and he is working with them to get that done for Fairbanks. He stated he recently had a good meeting with folks from the Sobering Center, and they are having difficulty keeping a fulltime staff. **Chair Matherly** spoke to the need to keep the Emergency Service Patrol (ESP) operating and to the challenge in funding the program. He shared that he met with the Fairbanks Downtown Association (DTA) the previous week to discuss snow removal, and the City is working on some ideas for downtown during the summer months. He stated that cameras will be installed in Golden Heart Plaza, and the City aims to place an officer downtown again next summer, whether it be a Fairbanks Police Department (FPD) officer or a Volunteer in Policing (VIP). He briefly discussed the staffing struggles at the FPD. **Chair Matherly** shared that the City Council working on the 2020 budget, and they will hold meetings rest of week starting at 7 a.m. **Chair Matherly** stated that since the planned FDC work session did not work out, he would like the FDC to reschedule it for early in 2020. He stated he would like to hear FDC members' ideas on when to hold the work session, and he has some ideas on things that need to be worked on. He requested that the City Clerk send out a poll so that each member could select their date preferences.

Ms. Jackson asked Chair Matherly how one goes about informing the City of a problem property if it is a non-emergency issue. **Chair Matherly** stated that folks can call, text, or email him to let him know.

Ms. Thomas asked how members should go about selecting agenda topics for the FDC work session. **Chair Matherly** stated he worked with Vice Chair Harriger prior to the last scheduled

work session to set an agenda. **Ms. Harriger** stated it would be a good idea for the FDC to meet prior to the work session to set an agenda. She suggested that a committee be formed to plan the format, location, and other details for the work session. **Chair Matherly** stated he is putting all other subcommittees on hiatus for the time being until the FDC forms a reorganization plan.

Mr. Dorton suggested using an online program called “Airtable” for members to interact and communicate. **Ms. Harriger** pointed out that using an online program for members to communicate may violate the Open Meetings Act (OMA).

Ms. Rogers requested that the work session be held at City Hall; she stated that meeting at City Hall gives validation to the group and shows that the City supports its efforts.

Mr. Walters suggested that members be presented with the option of holding a work session in lieu of a regular monthly meeting.

FIVE-MINUTE PRESENTATIONS (Representatives from: City Council, Fairbanks North Star Borough, Military, Indigenous People, and FNSB School District)

Mr. Walters questioned what had happened with the three Borough-appointed members when the size of the FDC changed from 15 to 11 voting members. He stated that he spoke with someone from the Borough who told him he was now the only Borough-appointed member to the FDC. Clerk Snider explained that the ordinance reduced the Borough appointees from 3 to 1. She stated she has been in contact with the Borough Mayor’s Office in regard to the change.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Ms. Harriger shared that there will be Gwich’in fiddle dances at the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center November 14-16. She stated that on the 15th and 16th from 2-5 p.m. there will be a Gwich’in reading and writing class at Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center.

Mr. Dorton stated there will be another fiddle dance happening at the hall at the same time.

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

- a) Regular Meeting Minutes of July 9, 2019
- b) Regular Meeting Minutes of September 10, 2019
- c) Regular Meeting Minutes of October 8, 2019

Mr. Toelle, seconded by **Mr. Rucker**, moved to APPROVE all three sets of meeting minutes.

Chair Matherly called for objection to APPROVING all three sets of Meeting Minutes, and, hearing none, so ORDERED.

HUMAN RESOURCES REPORT

a) Report by Police Chief Reeder on Officer Training

Police Chief Nancy Reeder spoke about crisis intervention training (CIT) and mental health techniques. She stated that CIT is something police officers need to embrace, although some tend to be nervous about it. She stated the goal is to give officers confidence in knowing how to deal with mental health issues. She stated there will be a 40-hour training the week of December 9 and again in the spring of 2020; she explained that the training that will be open to FPD officers, Fairbanks Emergency Communication Center (FECC) dispatchers, and other law enforcement in the region. She stated that each class can accommodate 20 attendees. Chief Reeder stated that within the next couple weeks FPD will begin two mandatory classes funded by a Bureau of Justice grant: *Dynamics of Officer and Citizen Encounters* and *Leading without Rank – Leadership for the Line Officer*. Chief Reeder stated that in 2020 there is another federal grant to fund officer wellness training.

Chair Matherly stated he was excited to see several new recruits in City Hall for testing.

Chief Reeder stated FPD is losing staff. She stated that some of the loss is the natural course of police work but that there are other contributing factors like forced overtime. She stated that FPD lost some good Sergeants to the City of North Pole recently. She shared that the department will lose five officers in early 2020 to retirement. Chief Reeder reported that when she started at the City in June the department was down eight positions; she stated several positions were filled, and three will graduate from the academy later in the week. She stated that, currently, FPD is down five positions, but the department will be ten officers short if more are not hired soon. She reported that six candidates were tested recently, and they all passed.

Ms. Thomas commended Chief Reeder for implementing some awareness about mental health and stated that change is sometimes hard. She asked whether the officer wellness class would entail secondary trauma; Chief Reeder stated she is sure it will.

Ms. Jackson expressed hope that FPD could get training on dealing with diverse populations. She asked Chief Reeder about FPD's partnerships with different agencies in the community to help with officer support. Chief Reeder stated that utilizing folks in the community for officer wellness is a great idea. She stated that when the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) came to town, they put on a cross-cultural communication training that many City employees attended. She stated that FPD needs to start doing some diversity training.

Ms. Davis asked about the department's cold case files. Chief Reeder stated that she is not prepared to give an update but that she could report back at the next FDC meeting.

Mr. Walters stated that in the past, the FDC has had a place on the interview panel for FPD candidates. He asked about the timeline for the next round of interviews. Chief Reeder stated that the department is no longer doing oral boards for FPD candidates. She stated that there were no oral boards done for the six new hires that came on board over the summer.

Mr. Walters asked whether the FDC could have a role in the hiring process. Chief Reeder stated that most of the process involves digging into the background of applicants, which is confidential. She stated she is open to suggestions, and she spoke to importance of consistency in the process. Chief Reeder stated that for special things such as internal promotions and K-9 assignments, she brings in individuals and groups from the community.

Ms. Rogers stated that questions about the filming project continue to come in, and she requested an update. Chief Reeder stated that nothing has been publicized yet, and the project is not complete. She stated that the first episode came in for review in June. She stated that the TV show involves other Alaskan communities, not just Fairbanks. She shared that there was nothing she saw in her review that would bring the community into a bad light. Chief Reeder stated that the second episode just came in for review, and FPD asked for only one edit to a reference to Alaska Statute that was overlaid on the screen. She reported that she has not seen anything so far that she would have a concern with.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a) FDC Confirmation of Appointment of Second Vice Chairperson

Chair Matherly stated that he is asking for confirmation from the FDC for Ms. Thomas to be appointed as Second Vice Chair.

Mr. Toelle, seconded by **Mr. Lee**, moved to APPROVE the appointment of Ms. Thomas to the position of Second Vice Chair.

Ms. Jackson questioned whether the Mayor considers a member's knowledge of the Diversity Action Plan (DAP) or their longevity with the FDC when making an appointment to Second Vice Chair. **Chair Matherly** stated he knows Ms. Thomas well. He pointed out that Ms. Harriger was fairly new to the FDC when she was appointed as Second Vice Chair.

Ms. Jackson wondered if other members may be interested in holding the position. **Mr. Lee** stated that it is nice to be thought of, but he does not have a problem with appointing Ms. Thomas.

Ms. Rogers stated she has great confidence in Ms. Thomas. She stated she believes Ms. Jackson's question related to the selection process and that perhaps the process can be discussed in the FDC planning session.

Chair Matherly stated he took it upon himself to make the selection, and it was not his intent to slight anyone.

Ms. Harriger stated she has no doubt that Ms. Thomas would be an excellent co-chair. She expressed concern with some of Ms. Thomas' comments to former member Lisa Slayton at a previous meeting. **Ms. Harriger** asked Ms. Thomas about her mission in serving on the FDC. She also asked about Ms. Thomas' thoughts on LGBTQ issues and stated that the FDC needs to be a safe space for everyone in the community. **Ms. Thomas** stated that her comments to Ms. Slayton were in defense of the Mayor, and there was some disrespect taking place at that meeting.

She stated that she operates a non-profit in the community, and she treats people with dignity and respect regardless of their sexual orientation. **Ms. Harriger** stated that the comment Ms. Thomas made was in regard to whether one's sexual orientation was a choice and whether sexual orientation should be treated as a civil rights issue. **Ms. Harriger** asked Ms. Thomas if she recalled the comment; **Ms. Thomas** replied that she does not recall the comment. She reiterated that she treats people with respect and trains her staff to do the same. She stated she is entitled to an opinion as are other members. She stated it is not her job to debate the LGBTQ issue with someone.

Mr. Lee recalled when the FDC voted to confirm Ms. Jackson's appointment to Second Vice Chair; he stated that the Mayor puts a name forward, the FDC votes, and he believes that is fair.

Mr. Walters asked about the process of selecting a Second Vice Chair. Clerk Snider explained that the Fairbanks General Code (FGC) states that the position is appointed by the Mayor with confirmation by the FDC. She stated there is no specific process or requirements for the Mayor's selection. **Mr. Walters** stated that he recalls the conversation Ms. Harriger referred to, and he was a little taken aback at the time. He stated that he believes that the comment he heard from Ms. Thomas was that being gay is a choice. He stated that as a gay man, he does not agree with that statement. He stated he is not trying to put Ms. Thomas on the spot, and he appreciates the statements she just gave. He stated that he struggles a little bit as a member of the FDC after what occurred last spring. He stated that there are many GLBTQ people in the community who may not apply to serve because of the issue. **Mr. Walters** stated that he believes in the FDC, and he believes things are better when people communicate with each other in respect. He stated that everyone has an opinion, but his orientation is not a choice – it is who he is. He stated he likes that members of the FDC all come from different places. He stated that he hopes Ms. Thomas does not view his statements as criticism towards her.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF MS. THOMAS TO THE POSITION OF SECOND VICE CHAIR AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Jackson, Walters, Webb, Harriger, Davis, Lee, Toelle, Dorton, Rucker, Williams

NAYS: None

Due to the nature of the motion, Ms. Thomas did not vote.

Chair Matherly declared the MOTION CARRIED.

b) Discussion on Court System Data Collection in the Jury Selection Process

Chair Matherly stated that he would like his earlier comments on the item to suffice. He stated that he will work with the City Attorney on the issue, and it may be a part of the FDC work session. He stated that he would dedicate more time to the issue and bring something to the FDC.

c) Member Acknowledgement of FDC Purpose and Role

Chair Matherly, referring to his veto earlier in the year, stated that it caused some anger in the community. He stated his intent was not to insult anyone, and he respects what everyone has to say. He stated, however, that the incident at a previous meeting that members referred to earlier was over the top. He stated that the FDC is the most emotional committee of the City. He stated

that he takes what Mr. Walters says to heart, and he urged him to remain on the FDC. **Chair Matherly** stated that the memo of acknowledgement was brought forward to address the incident that occurred. He stated that if the acknowledgement is thrown out by the FDC, he is fine with that as long as members agree to be respectful to one another.

Mr. Toelle, seconded by **Ms. Jackson**, moved to do away with the Memorandum of Acknowledgement.

Ms. Jackson stated that signing the paper is not going to change anyone's behavior. She stated that she hopes when folks are interviewed by the Mayor, they understand the role they are expected to fulfill on the FDC. She stated she does not believe the memo of acknowledgement is necessary.

Chair Matherly indicated that if FDC members decide to sign the memorandum, he will require other City Board and Commission members to sign a similar statement.

Ms. Thomas asked whether members can be removed by the Mayor. **Chair Matherly** stated that he has never considered removing a member and that removal of a member would have to go before the City Council.

Chair Matherly called for a voice vote on the motion to do away with the Memorandum of Acknowledgement. All members voted in favor, and there were none opposed.

FDC COMMITTEE REPORTS

Chair Matherly stated that FDC Committees will be put aside for a while.

FDC MEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. Dorton stated he is grateful for the opportunity to serve on the FDC.

Ms. Williams echoed Mr. Dorton's comment.

Ms. Thomas thanked Chief Reeder for her report and stated her heart goes out to the Chief as it can be challenging for a woman working in a male-dominant field. She stated that her own mother was a female police officer in Louisiana. She stated she is proud to serve on the FDC.

Ms. Davis welcomed the new members. She suggested that FDC meetings be made less formal. She stated that the seating arrangement can be intimidating to some people, and she wants the community to feel included and offer input to the FDC. **Chair Matherly** stated that is something that can be discussed at the FDC work session.

Ms. Jackson thanked Mayor Matherly for everything he is doing to rejuvenate the FDC. She stated that when she was the Vice Chair she met with the Mayor and Clerk to set the FDC agenda, and it gave her buy-in. She expressed hope that the process would continue for meeting planning.

She commended Mayor Matherly for addressing the jury selection issue and spoke in support of an annual work session to look at what the FDC has accomplished and where it is going.

Mr. Toelle expressed appreciation that Chief Reeder is addressing CIT training. He stated that most negative interactions between citizens and police involve race or mental health issues. He stated it has been a good meeting. He stated he was happy to see the memorandum of acknowledgement go away.

Mr. Lee referenced Mr. Walters' earlier comments about the FDC's prior participation in FPD interviews. He stated that the purpose was to promote transparency, and he does not want that to be forgotten. He thanked Mr. Walters for raising the issue.

Mr. Rucker stated that he had no comments.

Ms. Rogers stated she is appreciative of the meeting. She stated she has had concerns about where the FDC is going because it has stumbled. She stressed the importance of moving forward together and commented on the good attendance of members at the meeting.

Mr. Walters thanked Chief Reeder for the report. In response to a recent newspaper article about the FDC changes, he commented that it was difficult for the FDC to meet quorum when there were six vacancies. He stated that many members are committed and are trying their best. He stated that the article may not have characterized the situation accurately.

Ms. Harriger welcomed the new members. She stated it feels good to have a full room, and she was excited to hear the new members' stories. She stated that Chief Reeder's report was inspiring. She stated she is delighted that there are so many members present but sad that the FDC membership was cut; she stated a larger body was more inclusive. She stated that focusing on the positive, she is excited and grateful.

Chair Matherly stated that a person does not have to be an FDC member to be involved. He explained that he did not want to fill the vacancies on the FDC only to have the membership reduced and have to remove members. He stated that there is now a good-sized, diverse group of people. He stated that no political games were involved in the change and that being at full strength is something to celebrate.

Ms. Webb welcomed the two new members. She stated that most of the comments she was going to make have already been said by others. She stated she looks forward to working together and moving forward.

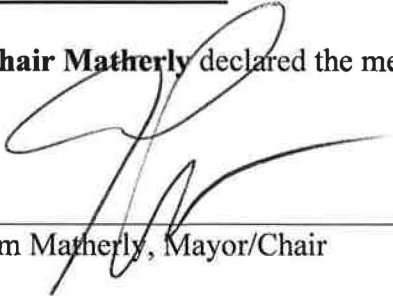
Ms. Rogers, in defense of the News Miner, stated that they have a lot of new staff. She stated there is an obligation to educate them, so they are better informed when they write an article. She spoke to creating a partnership that serves both the City and the media well.

MEETING DATES

Chair Matherly shared that the next Regular Meeting of the FDC is scheduled for Tuesday, December 10, 2019.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Matherly declared the meeting ADJOURNED at 7:19 p.m.



Jim Matherly, Mayor/Chair



D. Danyielle Snider, CMC, City Clerk

Transcribed by: DS