



FAIRBANKS DIVERSITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
OCTOBER 12, 2021, 5:30 – 7:00 P.M.
HELD VIA [ZOOM WEBINAR](#) AND AT
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 via Zoom Webinar and at the City Council Chambers, 800 Cushman Street, Fairbanks, Alaska, with Chair Andrew Aquino (Seat G) presiding (Z) and with the following members in attendance [Z = Zoom; P = In Person]:

Members Present: (Z) Timothy Ledna, Seat A (Z) Dorothy Shockley, Seat F
(P) Robert Dorton, Seat B (Z) Abigail North, Seat K
(Z) Jose Martinez II, Seat C (Z) June Rogers, Councilmember
(Z) Juanita Webb, Seat D (P) Angela Foster-Snow, HR Director
(Z) Shelissa Thomas, Seat E

Members Absent: Vacant, Seat H Cheyenna Kuplack, Seat J
Kelvin Lee, Seat I Jim Matherly, Mayor

Also Present: (P) D. Danyielle Snider, City Clerk

CALL TO ORDER & READING OF THE FDC MISSION STATEMENT

Chair Aquino called the meeting to order and read the FDC mission statement.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Aquino led the FDC in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Ledna, seconded by **Mr. Dorton**, moved to APPROVE the Agenda.

There being no objection or proposed changes, the minutes were APPROVED.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS (Limited to 3 Minutes)

There were no Citizens' Comments.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

Chair Aquino recognized that the day prior was Indigenous Peoples Day. He stated that Fairbanksans work, play, and reside in the traditional lands of Indigenous Peoples, and it should be acknowledged, especially in light of all the bodies of the boarding school children found across

North America. He stated that the FDC is a place where people can talk about difficult things. He stated that October is also Breast Cancer Awareness month, Sober October, Domestic Violence Awareness month, and Global Diversity Awareness month. He stated that studies show that marginalized groups are at higher risk of being victims of domestic violence and substance abuse.

Ms. Rogers stated that she reminded everyone in September that it was Suicide Prevention and Awareness month. She stated that it is an issue that people should be reminded of every month.

Chair Aquino stated that Suicide Prevention and Awareness and Sober October are two things that are near to his heart. He stated that the FDC has not had a meeting since April, and he is excited to dig into the Diversity Action Plan (DAP). He stated it will be good to start being proactive instead of reactive. He shared that he was invited in mid-September to join a hiring panel at the Fairbanks Police Department (FPD). He stated that he participated in three interviews, and he feels confident in those candidates who were put forward. He stated he will follow up with Chief Dupee to see which candidates moved forward.

Ms. Rogers asked whether it would be possible for the FDC to invite all new hires – especially at the FPD – to introduce themselves to the FDC. **Ms. Foster-Snow** replied affirmatively; she stated that she can invite them, but she cannot guarantee attendance. She shared that the three candidates Mr. Aquino referred to in his report have all been onboarded at the City. **Ms. Rogers** stated it is a positive thing for them to understand that the FDC is a support group for their efforts. **Chair Aquino** stated that the FDC can rework the way meetings are done, and he mentioned all the fresh faces. He encouraged the FDC to make meetings exciting to attend, and he stated that City employees are welcome to attend.

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

- a) Regular Meeting Minutes of April 13, 2021
- b) Work Session Meeting Minutes of May 11, 2021

Ms. Thomas, seconded by **Ms. North**, moved to APPROVE both sets of previous minutes.

There being no objection or proposed changes, the minutes were APPROVED.

NEW BUSINESS

- a) Resolution No. 4981, Reading of Land Acknowledgement at City Council Meetings

Chair Aquino asked Ms. Rogers to provide a report on Resolution No. 4981. **Ms. Rogers** stated that Council Member Kun has been reading a land acknowledgement at City Council meetings in her own comments. She stated that there are many in the community who are reading a land acknowledgement as part of their meeting. She explained that Resolution No. 4981 would make the reading of a land acknowledgement part of regular City Council meetings. She stated that the City Council thought it best to have the FDC's input before voting on the resolution.

Chair Aquino read aloud the land acknowledgement proposed by the resolution.

Mr. Martinez and Ms. Shockley joined the meeting at 5:42 p.m.

Chair Aquino stated that he feels comfortable knowing that the acknowledgement has been vetted and approved by Elders. He stated that he does not believe he is the best person to provide input on changes since he is not Indigenous.

Ms. Shockley stated that she did not receive the agenda packet. Clerk Snider stated that she would try to resend the email to Ms. Shockley. **Ms. Shockley** stated that she has not received many FDC communications since she was appointed. She stated this is her first meeting to attend where there is a quorum. Clerk Snider stated that she will try to resolve the email issue.

Chair Aquino stated that the City Council delayed the resolution in hopes of gaining input from the FDC.

Mr. Ledna wondered whether the FDC could provide some rationale as to why there should be a land acknowledgement. He suggested the rationale is equally as important as the content of the acknowledgement.

Ms. Shockley stated that earlier this year someone who works with language sent her a land acknowledgement which recognizes the original inhabitants of the land. She suggested that the original inhabitants should be recognized, and she would like to see a stronger-worded resolution. She stated she appreciates the gesture, but the resolution is generic.

Ms. Rogers stated that she is happy to hear Ms. Shockley's comments, which shows why it is important for the issue to come before the FDC. She suggested that the item could be carried over to the next FDC meeting if need be.

Chair Aquino stated that some groups may provide a land acknowledgement without an understanding of why they do it. He emphasized the importance of the "why." He expressed support for taking more time to review the resolution.

Ms. Shockley stated that people want to acknowledge Indigenous People, but it is important that the traditional inhabitants are acknowledged. She stated that she would like to consult with some language scholars to make sure the correct tribe is acknowledged. **Chair Aquino** asked Ms. Shockley whether she would like support from the FDC in her efforts. **Ms. Shockley** stated that she would.

Mr. Dorton stated that he knows Sonny Luke who knows all the stories about Fairbanks; he stated he was taught by Chief Howard Luke. He suggested reaching out to Sonny Luke and offered to introduce him. He spoke briefly about his own family line.

Chair Aquino suggested that Ms. Shockley and Mr. Dorton form a subcommittee to study the land acknowledgement and put some ideas and options together before the next FDC meeting. He asked Ms. Shockley to introduce herself to the group.

Ms. Shockley stated that she grew up in Manley Hot Springs and gave a little information about her parents. She stated that she is Upper Koyukon Athabascan of the Caribou Clan. She shared that she resides in Fairbanks and has three grown children. She provided some professional background information and stated that she appreciates the opportunity to serve on the FDC.

Chair Aquino called upon Mr. Ledna to introduce himself, but Mr. Ledna was unavailable. **Chair Aquino** stated that Mr. Ledna has showed up to the last few meetings when there was not a quorum. He stated that Mr. Ledna works for the Fairbanks Reentry Coalition, a nonprofit organization. He asked Ms. North to introduce herself.

Ms. North stated she teaches high school science and has lived in Fairbanks (mostly) since 2001. She stated that she relocated to Fairbanks to attend the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) and did not want to leave. She stated she is originally from Georgia, and she lives in Fairbanks with her wife, dog, five chickens, and one fish.

Chair Aquino stated that Ms. Shockley and Mr. Dorton will work together to bring something back to the FDC regarding the land acknowledgement resolution. Clerk Snider pointed out that the City Council had postponed the resolution only until November 8, but that Ms. Rogers could recommend postponing it further, until the FDC could provide a recommendation.

b) Appointment of Vice Chair

Chair Aquino provided some background on the recent changes made to the chair and vice chair positions of the FDC. He invited anyone interested in co-chairing to come forward next meeting. Clerk Snider clarified that the chair and vice chair positions are for a one-year term, and the vice chair position is confirmed by the FDC.

Ms. Shockley expressed interest in serving as the vice chair. **Ms. Thomas** nominated Mr. Dorton to serve as vice chair; **Mr. Dorton** declined to accept the nomination, stating that he is currently too busy. **Chair Aquino** asked whether any other members were interested.

Clerk Snider noted that Mr. Lee and Ms. Kuplack were not present. She noted also that Mr. Martinez and Mr. Ledna were no longer on the Zoom meeting.

Chair Aquino stated that he nominates Ms. Shockley to serve as vice chair. He directed that the vice chair appointment would be placed on the next meeting agenda.

c) Review of FDC Policies & Procedures

Chair Aquino spoke about the struggles of the FDC over the past year. He stated he would like to discuss meeting structure and frequency and take the opportunity for the FDC to re-center itself.

i) Discussion on Sub-Committees

Chair Aquino stated that the FDC is required to meet quarterly, and he is favorable to that with the formation of subcommittees to help with action items. He spoke to creating subcommittees

for policies and procedures and the DAP, along with an ad hoc committee to work on the land acknowledgement.

Chair Aquino stated he has sensed that monthly attendance has felt obligatory instead of feeling empowering, and he commented that he wants everyone to be excited to attend meetings. He stated that if meeting every month is too much, the group can adjust. **Chair Aquino** asked Ms. Rogers, a long-standing member of the FDC, whether she has ever seen attendance this poor. **Ms. Rogers** indicated that she has not and that there has been a definite change in demeanor. She spoke against moving to quarterly meetings and explained how subcommittee meetings were set up in the past. She stated that there have been a variety of things that have brought the FDC to this point of poor attendance. She stated that people who can make a commitment to attendance should be sought out. **Ms. Rogers** stated that the FDC has made many moves forward, and she does not want to see the group continue to slide away.

Ms. Webb agreed with Ms. Rogers. She suggested that members each take a personal inventory to determine whether they are the right fit for the FDC. She stated that some may find themselves too involved with other things, and maybe they would like to give others an opportunity to serve.

Ms. Thomas expressed agreement with Chair Aquino's suggestion about moving to quarterly meetings. She stated that attendance became a problem before the pandemic, and the Mayor reduced the membership of the FDC to try to help the body make quorum. She stated that she embraces the idea of quarterly meetings with subcommittees that are active in the meantime. She stated that subcommittees would help keep members connected, and people may feel more excited about attending meetings if they were quarterly.

Ms. Shockley stated she feels the FDC is very important, and she would not like to move to quarterly meetings. She suggested putting out a survey to FDC members requesting input on meeting frequency and time. She stated she supports monthly meetings.

Ms. North commented that meeting every other month would be amenable. She supported the idea of seeing whether a different meeting time may work better for members and commented that some folks may have a hard time getting to the meeting by 5:30 p.m.

Chair Aquino asked City staff whether changing the meeting time would be possible. Clerk Snider stated that the meeting time is up to the FDC. She cautioned only that the FDC work with City staff in the process of any meeting time and date changes to ensure there are not other meetings happening at the same time. **Chair Aquino** stated that he could put together a poll to FDC members so that everyone could weigh in about meeting frequency and time.

Mr. Dorton suggested having everyone renew their commitment by confirming that they will attend the next meeting. He stated that he will be at the next meeting, and he thanked everyone for attending the present meeting. **Chair Aquino** stated that is something that could be added to closing statements on the agenda.

Ms. Shockley suggested adding an opportunity for input on the poll regarding barriers to attendance.

Chair Aquino asked for members' input on forming subcommittees, each made up of up to three members. He proposed a governance committee, which he volunteered to be a part of. He stated he would also like to have a subcommittee to look at the DAP with fresh eyes, and he suggested that Mr. Ledna and Ms. North work on that.

Ms. Shockley stated that it should not take too much time to work on the land acknowledgement. She stated that, being new to the FDC, she does not know a lot about it but that she sees great potential. She stated that there is so much work to be done, and she would like to see the FDC be more visible in the community. **Chair Aquino** stated that Ms. Shockley touched on all the items in the DAP; he stated he would like Ms. Shockley to serve on that subcommittee as well. He briefly explained the format of the DAP and stated that it needs to be further developed and refined. He stated that he has found that identifying a baseline, then identifying measurable progress is helpful with these types of projects.

Ms. Rogers reminded everyone of the potluck the FDC held just before the pandemic began. She asked whether that is something the FDC should return to and use as a starting point. **Chair Aquino** supported the idea and stated that he would like the subcommittee to bring their ideas forward for the entire group to review together. **Ms. Foster-Snow** stated that there is currently a ban on food-sharing at City Hall due to COVID-19; she stated that the only exception is for food that is individually wrapped. She stated that everyone would have to bring their own food, but she commented that she does not know the rules about meeting offsite. She highlighted several objectives and projects that the FDC has had success with and commented that having a goal in mind has helped the group achieve success. She stated that she is excited that the City Council is pushing more things to the FDC.

Chair Aquino suggested holding a work session in place of the next regular meeting, and no members objected.

d) Presentation Request from Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce Jackie Lundberg

Chair Aquino stated that the Chamber had requested a presentation from the FDC some time ago. He stated there was not much to present on at that time, but he foresees similar invitations to the FDC in the future. He asked members for input on how the FDC should respond to those requests. He asked whether one member could represent the body by doing a presentation and how much lead time would be needed. He stated that he responded to the Chamber's request by stating that the FDC currently had nothing to report but would like to have the opportunity in the future. He asked members whether they would allow him to present in the first or second quarter of the new year on behalf of the FDC. **Ms. Shockley** offered her support of the idea and mentioned other local agencies and organizations that might be interested in that type of partnership with the FDC. **Chair Aquino** asked, "What is the Diversity Council?" He stated that it might be helpful to have a pamphlet or flyer that serves as an "FDC 101." No other members commented on this item or spoke in opposition to Chair Aquino's question.

e) Discussion on Letters of Support by the FDC

Chair Aquino stated that the FDC gets asked to sign letters of support for different causes, and he would like to have a process by which to address such requests. He stated he feels that since the

Mayor is no longer the chair, the FDC may have more flexibility to sign letters of support that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. He asked the Clerk whether there was ever a process by which the FDC could offer letters of support. Clerk Snider stated that there are several letters of support, resolutions, and position statements by the FDC on the City website. She stated the FDC must follow the code under which it was created, and the FDC was created to advise and provide recommendations to the City Council. She explained that if the FDC took a position on a bill in the state legislature, for example, it would not be appropriate without first going through the City Council. She stated that there are ways to have an impact on the community, but she advised caution when making statements on behalf of the City. **Chair Aquino** asked what the best process would be when an organization or agency contacts the FDC and requests its support for a certain item. He asked whether it would be appropriate for the FDC to put forth a recommendation to the City Council so that the City Council could act on the item. Clerk Snider confirmed that would be the appropriate process. **Ms. Rogers** spoke about past recommendations the FDC has made to the City Council. She asked the Clerk how many times the FDC has made such recommendations. Clerk Snider replied that there are four resolutions, one recommendation, one official statement, and one addendum to a resolution. **Ms. Rogers** stated that there has been a lot of work done and accomplishments made by the FDC.

FDC MEMBERS' COMMENTS

Chair Aquino asked whether any members had comments to share.

Ms. Rogers stated she would like the FDC to consider holding talking circles; she stated that format helps people get to know each other, and it promotes trust. **Ms. Foster-Snow** spoke in support of the talking circle format and commented that she believes it brought the group closer together. She stated it helped people understand the individual goals of one another, and it was a good way to build relationships. She stated that it may be especially helpful during a transitional time such as now. **Chair Aquino** asked whether those meetings were recorded or streamed. Clerk Snider she recalls the meeting was more like an informal-type of work session. She stated the meeting was still advertised, but no minutes or recording was taken. **Chair Aquino** stated that there are already two strong agenda items for the November meeting: the DAP and the talking circle.

Ms. Foster-Snow stated that Wendy Tisland is present and will hopefully be the new Borough appointee to the FDC. She wanted to recognize Ms. Tisland's presence and pointed out that she has been present at the last few meetings. **Ms. Foster-Snow** shared that the City Council approved an ordinance on October 11 to provide up to four weeks of paid medical maternity leave, up to two weeks of paid parental leave, and up to three days of paid funeral leave to City employees. She stated the City is struggling to retain quality employees, and better benefits is one of the things that employees brought forward as a reason to stay at the City. She stated that the City Council listened, and now the City is the only government agency in the community that offers paid leave outside of disability or insurance. She stated she is grateful that the City Council approved the ordinance. **Ms. Foster-Snow** reported that turnover at the City has been higher than she would like it to be. She commented that the FDC can help the City recruit and help keep the City's workforce diverse and equitable. She encouraged FDC members to thank City Council members for their vote on the ordinance.

Ms. Shockley stated that she is excited to be a part of the FDC. She stated she looks forward to making a positive difference for the community.

Ms. North thanked everyone and stated that she is happy the FDC has finally achieved a quorum. She stated it is nice to have a meeting.

Ms. Thomas stated that she was out of state five months for medical reasons for a family member. She stated she is glad to be back in Fairbanks, and she is happy to see the snow.

Mr. Dorton stated that in the month of September there was an awareness walk for overdoses. He stated that many from the recovery community walked from Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center to Pioneer Park, and the Fairbanks Reentry Coalition flew in some performers from Anchorage for the event. He stated that Roscoe and Kelvin with No Limits fed everyone, and many people from Fairbanks Native Association (FNA) showed up. He stated it was cool to see Fairbanks turning into the recovery town that he envisioned. He stated that nearly 100 people walked to raise overdose awareness. **Mr. Dorton** commented on Mr. Ledna's affiliation with the Crisis Now program. He stated that he is pleased to be a part of the FDC and to represent the Alaska Native community as well as the recovery community. He stated he is also pleased to see some of his own goals being met.

Ms. Rogers stated that she attends the Crisis Now meetings, and she spoke highly of the program. She stated that a group from Deschutes, OR did a presentation at the last Crisis Now meeting on their program. She stated that the presenter spoke about many things, but one of the things the presenter said was, "Don't let perfect be in the way of good." **Ms. Rogers** stated people should celebrate the good and continue to move forward, understanding that perfection is never going to be achieved.

MEETING DATES

Chair Aquino stated that the next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 9, 2021. He stated it will be a work session where members can bring their own bagged dinner.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Shockley, seconded by **Ms. Thomas**, moved to ADJOURN the meeting.

Hearing no objection, **Chair Aquino** declared the meeting
ADJOURNED at 7:15 p.m.



Andrew Aquino, Chair



D. Danyielle Snider, MMC, City Clerk

Transcribed by: DS