



FAIRBANKS DIVERSITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
JUNE 14, 2022, 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 (P) and with the following members in attendance [Z = Zoom; P = In Person]:

Members Present: (P) Timothy Ledna, Seat A (Z) Kelvin Lee, Seat I
(P) Robert Dorton, Seat B (Z) Rachael Kvapil, Seat K
(Z) Shelissa Thomas, Seat E (Z) June Rogers, Council Member (at 5:39)
(Z) Wendy Tisland, Seat H (P) Angela Foster-Snow, HR Director

Members Absent: Vacant, Seat C Cheyenna Kuplack, Seat J (excused)
Juanita Webb, Seat D Jim Matherly, Mayor
Dorothy Shockley, Seat F

Also Present: (P) Mike Sanders, Chief of Staff (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.

INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS

Chair Aquino asked each FDC member to introduce themselves and answer the following question: *If you had unlimited resources, what would you do to further diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in our community?*

T. Ledna stated that he is the Fairbanks Reentry Coalition Coordinator, a member of the Mobile Crisis Team. In response to Chair Aquino’s question, he stated that he would create mixed income housing in Fairbanks so that the “haves” and the “have nots” would not be separated into different housing zones. He stated that folks of all socio-economic status could live together.

S. Thomas stated that she is with Restore Inc. in the Crisis Stabilization Center. She stated that if resources were unlimited, she would provide the opportunity for everyone to have health insurance and create a facility without barriers.

W. Tisland, in response to Chair Aquino’s question, stated that she would find ways to coordinate the efforts by different groups in order to maximize the benefits of what everyone is already doing. She stated she is the former EEO/Compliance Officer at the Fairbanks North Star Borough.

R. Kvapil stated that she is a “plain Jane” citizen. She stated that Chair Aquino’s question is difficult to answer, and she gave it a lot of thought. She stated she narrowed her response down to two initiatives: 1) additional funding for arts in the schools and community, and 2) a travel program for youth, regardless of socio-economic class. She stated that travel and arts lead to a broader view of culture in the world.

In response to Chair Aquino’s question, **B. Dorton** stated that he would invest in housing and education for people returning from incarceration or graduating from treatment programs.

K. Lee stated that he is a community member who would like to create a more sustainable situation where people see each other as one. He shared that his work is also in reentry, similar to that of B. Dorton’s. He stated he would like to create bigger facilities and see people working together.

Chair Aquino stated that if he had unlimited resources, he would sponsor a community spotlight in media where hard numbers can be turned into actual faces. He stated that many times baseline measurements remove the human element; he stated his idea would be an awareness campaign.

J. Rogers stated that money usually gets in the way of effective work with people. She stated that her method is to welcome, encourage, and work one-on-one with people. She stated that the way people treat one another is the best and most effective resource.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

There being no objections, the Agenda was APPROVED.

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

a) Regular Meeting Minutes of May 10, 2022

T. Ledna, seconded by **W. Tisland**, moved to APPROVE the meeting minutes as presented.

There being no objections, the Minutes were APPROVED.

CITIZENS’ COMMENTS (Limited to 3 Minutes)

Flora Roddy, Fairbanks – F. Roddy thanked the FDC for its involvement and interest in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District (FNSBSD) Diversity Committee. She stated that the committee is important, and its removal would be detrimental to the community. She stated that she works at the FNSBSD, is a member of the Pavva Iñupiaq dancers, has been involved with the World Eskimo-Indian Olympics, is a member of the Soaring Eagle Intertribal Drum, and is one-half Iñupiaq Eskimo. F. Roddy stated that diversity is very important to her – not just her own Native culture; she spoke to the diversity amongst her friends. She stated it is disheartening that the School Board is considering eliminating the FNSBSD Diversity Committee. She displayed a poster that she recently created that shows the diversity in the Fairbanks community, and she stated that everyone should be represented and treated fairly.

Erin Janoso – E. Janoso stated that she is a member of the FNSBSD Diversity Committee but clarified that she is not speaking on the committee’s behalf. She thanked the FDC for its words regarding the Diversity Committee and stated that if the committee is removed, it will be absorbed by a more general committee. She stated that the committee is important and needs to remain. She read aloud a portion of the memorandum drafted by Chair Aquino on the FDC agenda and again thanked the FDC for generating a conversation. E. Janoso stated that a decision on the committee will be made in the fall by a vote of the School Board, and she believes the FDC memorandum will be a part of that conversation. She briefly mentioned the Fairbanks Daily News Miner article. She thanked the FDC for the important work it does.

J. Rogers stated that she once served on the Diversity Committee and asked how many members there are currently. E. Janoso stated she believes there are about 16 members, and the number of members was recently examined. She explained that Chief School Administrator Karen Melin’s memo says that in the future there may be seven Diversity Committee members, which would change the membership. **J. Rogers** stated that the committee has had trouble filling vacancies in the past, and it is reassuring to hear that there are that many people now willing to serve. She stated that she is sorry to hear that the committee may go away and that she admires all that E. Janoso and F. Roddy are doing for the school district and in the community.

T. Ledna asked whether the memorandum had already been sent to the FNSBSD. **Chair Aquino** stated that it had not; he stated that the document would have to be approved by the FDC, then the City Council in order to be approved for transmittal to the School Board. **T. Ledna** commented that the public testimony makes it sound like the memorandum had already been sent to the School Board. He asked who has the memorandum and where the memorandum has been circulated. **Chair Aquino** stated that it is posted to the City website as part of the FDC agenda packet.

J. Rogers stated it is disappointing because it sets the group back when process is not followed. She stated that the FDC cannot justify breaking process by creating a situation.

Chair Aquino asked Clerk Snider to provide clarification on process. Clerk Snider stated that she could do so quickly, but it was still the time to hear Citizens’ Comments. She stated that the memorandum drafted by Chair Aquino is an action item on the evening’s agenda. She stated that the memorandum was published on the City website as part of the FDC agenda packet. Clerk Snider stated that she spoke with the News Miner reporter who wrote the article in the newspaper, and he stated that he found the item on the City website. She again clarified that the memorandum has not been circulated as approved by either the FDC or the City Council. She stated that the item is an action item that will be addressed by the FDC later in the meeting.

J. Rogers stated she appreciated the clarification. **T. Ledna** stated he was surprised to hear the earlier comments thanking the FDC for its letter. He stated he appreciates the clarification.

Hearing no more requests for comments, **Chair Aquino** declared Citizens’ Comments closed.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

Chair Aquino took a moment to honor former Chief of Staff Mike Meeks who passed away earlier in 2022. He stated that M. Meeks attended every FDC meeting, and his presence displayed his commitment to bettering Fairbanks. He fondly recalled M. Meeks’ smile and candidness and expressed appreciation for his support for the FDC. **Chair Aquino** asked FDC members to join

him in a moment of silence for M. Meeks. Following the moment of silence, **Chair Aquino** shared that a memorial event would be held for M. Meeks the coming weekend.

Chair Aquino stated that the City Council and Borough Assembly expect the FDC to provide advice and recommendations to promote equal opportunities for all members of the public. He stated that the FDC is expected to advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion for everyone, and in order to nurture Fairbanks, the FDC needs remain aligned with its mission. He stated that the FDC accomplishes that by recommending policies and actions that honor and embrace everyone and by shedding light on practices that may stray from the mission. **Chair Aquino** stated that the FDC strives to ensure the diverse character of the community is represented in impactful decision making. He advised the FDC to keep those things in mind when considering the upcoming agenda items. He stated that the FDC's responsibility is to the governing bodies, but the FDC's strength and influence lies in its dedication to and engagement with the community. He thanked fellow members for taking on the work of the FDC with him.

Chair Aquino stated that this may be B. Dorton's last meeting as an FDC member, and he thanked B. Dorton for being an active voice on the FDC.

a) Update from HR Director A. Foster Snow

A. Foster-Snow shared that some City staff recently had an exciting opportunity to participate in Arbinger training with Fairbanks Police Department (FPD), and she stated that more employees will have an opportunity to attend later in the month. She stated that the 2-day training is based on an outward mindset philosophy that encourages solid communication and healthy work and life practices. She reported on some recent recruitment and hiring efforts at the City, including the following positions: Assistant Fire Chief, Fire Department Training Captain, FPD Captain, Dispatchers. She spoke briefly to the difficulty in Dispatcher recruitment and retention due to the rigorous testing and background process and the long work hours and pressures of the job. **T. Ledna** asked about the hourly wage and minimum hours for a Dispatcher position. **A. Foster-Snow** stated that the wage is ~\$22.00/hour, and dispatchers work about 200 hours of overtime per month. She encouraged FDC members to have anyone they know who may be interested in the job to contact her. She mentioned that the City is also still recruiting to fill Police Officer positions. Lastly, she reported that the Fairbanks Fire Department (FFD) just closed the position of Recruit Firefighter, and there were 22 applicants.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a) Diversity Action Plan (DAP) Review

i) Combined Goals 5 and 6 (K. Lee and T. Ledna)

T. Ledna, seconded by **Chair Aquino**, moved to APPROVE the proposed edits to DAP Goals 5 and 6.

Chair Aquino stated that this item was postponed from the last meeting. He stated that T. Ledna had posed the question of whether the FDC will follow through with the goals and actions outlined in the two sections, and he gave the floor to T. Ledna.

T. Ledna stated that the action items require work outside of FDC meetings. He indicated that members should be willing to do some work outside of meetings if they would like the items to remain in the DAP. He commented that keeping the items in the document without doing them would be unauthentic, and if the actions are not realistic or practical, it may be better to remove them or call them aspirational. He spoke to his idea for a Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) Day of Service at the City and mentioned the City Council Resolution that the City Clerk forwarded to FDC member. He stated he is willing to spearhead the MLK Day of Service project and work on other activities outside of meetings but indicated that the activities should be sustainable.

J. Rogers thanked T. Ledna for being so generous in working towards an end result.

Chair Aquino stated the FDC is at a point to decide whether to renew its commitment to items 5 and 6.

W. Tisland stated that some things in items 5 and 6 almost seem to go beyond the guiding principles of the DAP, and she wondered whether those items belong. She questioned whether the items belong in the DAP.

T. Ledna asked about the original intent of the DAP. Clerk Snider displayed Fairbanks General Code (FGC) Sec. 2-235, Diversity Action Plan – Guiding Principles, on the overhead screen. Members reviewed the guiding principles, and discussion continued as to whether DAP items 5 and 6 belong in the Plan. **T. Ledna** stated it appears that the items are beyond the original intent of the DAP, but it does not mean that the FDC cannot still address some of those issues.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE PROPOSED EDITS TO DAP GOALS 5 AND 6 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: None
NAYS: Ledna, Thomas, Aquino, Tisland, Kvapil, Dorton, Lee
ABSENT: Webb, Shockley, Kuplack
Chair Aquino declared the MOTION FAILED.

T. Ledna, seconded by **W. Tisland**, moved to REMOVE Goals 5 and 6 from the DAP.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO REMOVE GOALS 5 AND 6 FROM THE DAP AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Kvapil, Lee, Tisland, Aquino, Thomas, Dorton, Ledna
NAYS: None
ABSENT: Webb, Shockley, Kuplack
Chair Aquino declared the MOTION CARRIED.

Members agreed to review the final, amended version of the DAP at the next regular meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

- a) FDC Resolution No. 2022-01 Approving the Reading of a Land Acknowledgement

Chair Aquino stated that the resolution would adopt the reading of a land acknowledgement at FDC meetings.

K. Lee, seconded by **B. Dorton**, moved to APPROVE FDC Resolution No. 2022-01.

Chair Aquino asked City Clerk Snider to provide a brief history as to how the resolution came about. Clerk Snider explained that former City Council Member Shoshana Kun worked with the Denakkanaaga Elders on the land acknowledgement language and introduced a City resolution in the summer of 2021 to approve the reading of a land acknowledgement at City Council meetings. She stated that the resolution was postponed multiple times and referred to the FDC for a recommendation. She stated that, ultimately, the FDC recommended approval of the reading of the land acknowledgement at City Council meetings, but the City Council failed its resolution. Clerk Snider stated that Chair Aquino then introduced the FDC resolution to approve the reading of the land acknowledgement at FDC meetings, and the language is the same as the original language presented by former City Council Member Kun.

J. Rogers asked Chair Aquino whether he had been in recent contact with the Elders; **Chair Aquino** stated that he had not. **J. Rogers** stated that she would like to see the land acknowledgement move forward, but she cautioned that the FDC should make certain that the Denakkanaaga Elders approve of the language. **S. Thomas** agreed and stated that would be respectful.

Chair Aquino clarified that all the previous edits have been removed, and the language in Resolution No. 2022-01 is the language that was originally proposed by former City Council Member Kun. **J. Rogers** stated that because of the circumstances surrounding the issue, it would be best to reach out to the Elders first and invite them to participate.

B. Dorton stated that he had been a part of drafting the edited language. He explained that the Denakkanaaga Elders were not fond of changing *Dena people* to *Ch'eno' people* because the Dena people is a much larger and more inclusive group that includes the Ch'eno' people. He stated the Denakkanaaga Elders do not want to take away from other tribes that are a part of the Dena people. **J. Rogers** reiterated the importance of reaching out again to the Elders.

W. Tisland pointed out that the language in Resolution No. 2022-01 was back to the original language approved by the Denakkanaaga Elders. She stated, however, that there is never any harm in reaching out again to the Elders. She stated that when the City Council did not approve its reading of the land acknowledgement, it resulted in some reaction from the Native community. She stated that was an unfortunate situation that she would not want to see happen with the FDC.

J. Rogers shared that Mayor Matherly is working on having the framed land acknowledgement mounted at the entry of City Council Chambers.

B. Dorton, seconded by **Chair Aquino**, moved to POSTPONE the motion to approve FDC Resolution No. 2022-01 to the next regular FDC meeting.

There being no objections, the motion to POSTPONE was APPROVED.

- b) Memorandum of Recommendation from the Fairbanks Diversity Council to the FNSB School Board

W. Tisland, seconded by **T. Ledna**, moved to APPROVE the Memorandum of Recommendation.

Chair Aquino stated that the statement, “if we talk the talk we have to walk the walk” has stuck with him. He stated that was his intent behind drafting the memorandum.

W. Tisland asked Chair Aquino how he got wind of this issue. **Chair Aquino** stated that he watches as many online meetings as possible, and the recommendation was put forth from the administration and a 3-person ad hoc committee. He stated that the School Board would vote on the issue in the fall.

T. Ledna stated that it is a well-written letter, and it balances the question of the FDC’s role in telling other bodies what to do or not do. He stated that there is likely a lot going on behind the scenes at the School District, and the intent behind the proposal seems to be efficiency. He expressed appreciation for the recommendation being put forward because it includes secondary recommendations if the primary one cannot be met. He stated that the following statement as written in the memorandum is a little too strong for him: “Should the school board be unable to consider the stated opportunities or intentionally explore other meaningful resources, the Fairbanks Diversity Council recommends striking all language related to DEIA initiatives from district publications, until capacity allows for *Excellence & Equity for All* to become a priority.” He stated that, overall, he would support the letter.

J. Rogers acknowledged that the FDC may want to express concern but stated that she is unsure whether the FDC is on solid ground by directing the actions of another body. **S. Thomas** agreed and stated that she had not read the memorandum.

Clerk Snider displayed the memorandum on the overhead screen. **Chair Aquino** stated that action by the School Board on the issue would not take place until the fall; he stated that he is open to working more on the item.

T. Ledna suggested using the term “encourage” instead of “recommend.” He stated he is undecided as to whether the strong statement he mentioned earlier is appropriate. **Chair Aquino** stated that he gave a lot of thought to the paragraph T. Ledna is referring to. He stated that he left it in because he felt that it would be an aggressive move for the School Board to eliminate the Diversity Committee. He stated that meeting folks where they are is pretty important and that one of the top tabs on the District’s website is titled, “Diversity.” He stated that removing the Committee does not seem like a logical next step.

S. Thomas asked whether the issue was discussed at the last FDC meeting. **Chair Aquino** stated that it was not. **S. Thomas** stated that the memorandum speaks for the entire FDC, and she asked how the letter could go out without FDC approval. **Chair Aquino** clarified that the memorandum has not been transmitted and that it is only an action item on the FDC agenda at this point.

W. Tisland stated that the memorandum, as part of the agenda packet, is on the public record and is available to everyone even though most FDC members were not aware of it. She stated that she has a bit of a problem with the item being drafted and presented in the way that it was. She indicated that the FDC is wading into territory where it should not be. **S. Thomas** agreed. **W.**

Tisland stated she would be more in favor of writing a letter of support for the Diversity Committee.

J. Rogers stated she is glad for the opportunity to have the discussion. She stated she believes the process has been upside down. She stated she believes that the FDC as a body determines through discussion which items they would like to see brought forward as action items. She suggested that Chair Aquino send a letter to the School Board on his own, but not on behalf of the FDC.

Chair Aquino stated that no matter the vote on the issue, he would like the FDC to consider where group fear may be coming from. He stated that in order to make history, there has to be some sort of conflict or change.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MEMORANDUM OF RECOMMENDATION AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Aquino, Ledna
NAYS: Thomas, Dorton, Kvapil, Tisland, Lee
ABSENT: Webb, Shockley, Kuplack
Chair Aquino declared the MOTION FAILED.

Chair Aquino stated that the time is 7:10 p.m., and he asked for a motion to continue the meeting for ten minutes longer to finish the agenda.

W. Tisland, seconded by **T. Ledna**, moved to CONTINUE the meeting for ten minutes longer to finish the agenda.

There being no objections, the motion was APPROVED.

c) Discussion and Follow-up on May Presentations by the NAACP and FPD

Chair Aquino stated that he wanted to give FDC members the opportunity to discuss the presentations at the last meeting by the NAACP and the FPD. He asked Clerk Snider to clarify the process by which the FDC could engage taking a position on the issue. Clerk Snider stated that letters of recommendation and FDC resolutions are placed on the agenda for consideration as a result of discussions by the body or by the Chair or Vice Chair of the FDC. She stated that the item, once on the agenda, becomes an action item for the FDC. She explained that items passed by the FDC are then forwarded to the City Council. She stated that when FDC resolutions or letters of recommendation are approved, the items are added to the FDC section of the City website.

Chair Aquino asked what the support of the FDC for the NAACP initiatives would look like. Clerk Snider stated that it would likely be a resolution of the FDC. **Chair Aquino** asked for feedback from the FDC on the last meeting.

T. Ledna asked whether it is proper for the Chair to place items on the agenda for the FDC to consider, such as the memorandum that was just discussed. Clerk Snider stated that the agenda is set by the Chair and Vice Chair, and members may add items to be considered for the agenda. She recognized that there was some confusion with the presentation of the memorandum previously discussed and stated that she would make an effort to clarify those types of items in the future with

a “DRAFT” stamp. **T. Ledna** stated that he does not believe the process was upside down as was previously stated; he stated that the Chair or members should be able to request agenda items.

T. Ledna stated that the last meeting was well-done, and he was pleased to be able to hear from both sides of the issue.

R. Kvapil stated she believes the meeting was very well-run, and she strives to maintain a good relationship with both sides that presented. She stated she learned a lot from the presentations, and it was worthwhile.

Chair Aquino asked FDC members for input on how to handle situations where past presenters would like to provide follow-up information or points of clarification to the FDC.

W. Tisland stated she thought Chair Aquino did a great job facilitating the last meeting. She suggested using a similar process as was used with the DAP and the land acknowledgement where parcels were split off for smaller groups to work on. She stated now the question is whether the FDC would like to pursue the recommendations made by the NAACP.

W. Tisland, seconded by **T. Ledna**, moved that the FDC support the recommendations made by the NAACP at its last meeting in respect to the “7 Points for a Safer Fairbanks.”

T. Ledna, seconded by **A. Aquino**, moved to REFER to the Education and Outreach Committee the motion that the FDC support the recommendations made by the NAACP at its last meeting in respect to the “7 Points for a Safer Fairbanks.”

There being no objections, the motion to REFER was APPROVED.

FDC MEMBERS’ COMMENTS

Chair Aquino stated that FDC elections are coming up in July. He asked members to consider nominations and clarified that nominations could be made the day of the meeting.

B. Dorton stated he has come to the conclusion that he will not be reapplying for another term on the FDC. He stated that his service on the FDC has been a good learning experience, and having a seat at the table has taught him how to feel included, how to use his voice, and how to fight for things he is passionate about. He stated it has also taught him how to speak with and make asks of others. He stated that there is a possibility that he will return to the FDC in the future.

T. Ledna shared that Fairbanks Community Bingo and Resource Fair was the previous Friday, and he provided the website for anyone interested in checking out photos from the last event at <https://www.fairbankscommunitybingo.com>. He stated that the next Community Bingo and Resource Fair event will be held August 12 in conjunction with Project Homeless Connect. He stated that the group will try to make connections in regard to the controversy that has erupted around Golden Heart Plaza. He stated that one of the goals of Project Homeless Connect is to try to bridge the gap between the goals of the tourist industry and the care and treatment of the people in the community. He asked members to spread the word about the August event.

City Clerk Snider reminded members and listeners that candidate filing for the October election will be July 15 – 29.

Chair Aquino wished everyone a Happy Pride Month.

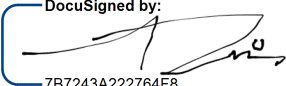
MEETING DATES

- a) Next Regular Meeting Date, July 12, 2022

ADJOURNMENT

T. Ledna, seconded by **R. Kvapil**, moved to ADJOURN the meeting.

There being no objections, the meeting was adjourned at 7:34 p.m.

DocuSigned by:

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Andrew Aquino, Chair



D. Danyielle Snider, MMC, City Clerk

Transcribed by: DS