



FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, SEPTEMBER 25, 2023
FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
800 CUSHMAN STREET, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

The City Council convened at 6:30 p.m. on the above date, following a 5:00 p.m. Work Session on the Fairbanks Downtown Plan, to conduct a Regular Meeting of the Fairbanks City Council via Zoom webinar and at the City Council Chambers, 800 Cushman Street, Fairbanks, Alaska, with Mayor Pruhs presiding and the following Councilmembers in attendance:

Councilmembers Present: Jerry Cleworth, Seat A
 June Rogers, Seat B
 Sue Sprinkle, Seat C
 Crystal Tidwell, Seat D
 Lonny Marney, Seat E
 John Ringstad, Seat F

Absent: None

Also Present: D. Danyielle Snider, City Clerk
 Thomas Chard, City Attorney
 Ron Dupee, Police Chief
 Rick Sweet, Deputy Police Chief
 Robert Pristash, City Engineer
 Andrew Cocco, Assistant Fire Chief (remotely)
 Jeff Jacobson, Public Works Director
 Kristi Meredith, Dispatch Manager (remotely)
 Brenda McFarlane, Crisis Now Coordinator
 Brynn Butler, Housing Coordinator

INVOCATION

The invocation was given by City Clerk Danyielle Snider.

FLAG SALUTATION

Mayor Pruhs asked Ms. Tidwell to lead the flag salutation.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS

[Clerk Note: Names of citizens who provide comments may not be spelled correctly if the citizen did not sign up for comments or if their name was illegible on the physical sign-up sheet.]

Dick Payne – D. Payne stated that he has been pushing the City for a long time to be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), especially during construction projects in residential areas. He expressed his frustration with experiences of being threatened and gaslighted for walking on sidewalks that do not have any “Sidewalk Closed” signage. He stated he has filed complaints regarding such treatment from City employees and alleged ADA violations, but there

has been no follow up and he feels that he is being trash-talked by the Chief of Staff. He indicated that it feels as though the City does not care about the Slaterville neighborhood. He referenced a particular pothole situation on Minnie Street that was not fixed according to ADA standards and has already sunken another four inches. He stated that his complaints are not being taken seriously.

Mr. Cleworth asked about the location of the pothole. D. Payne replied that he was unsure of the exact location on Minnie Street but stated that it is about six by eight feet and cannot be missed. He stated that he believes the project originated with the replacement of a fire hydrant that was hit by a drunk driver the previous year. He referenced the contractor performing the work as Executive [Exclusive] Paving, which he claimed frequently performs jobs within the City that are not ADA-compliant. He shared that when he called the Engineering Department to express his concern, he was told that the entire street is not ADA-compliant and, so the contractor is not required to make accommodations. **Mr. Cleworth** explained the restraints of meeting protocols but stated that he could provide a response to D. Payne's comments later in the meeting.

Ms. Rogers asked D. Payne if this was his first time bringing this type of issue to the City. D. Payne indicated that this is his first time bringing the issue to a Council meeting, but he has made several complaints to the City Engineer and Chief of Staff. **Ms. Rogers** expressed appreciation for D. Payne taking the time to come and address these kinds of issues.

Mayor Pruhs clarified that if anyone was present to testify on Ordinance No. 6264 they would need to do so under Citizens' Comments, as there would not be a public hearing at the first reading. He stated the ordinance will have a public hearing at the next regular meeting on October 9.

Juanita Webb – J. Webb shared that she was recently elected as Chair of the Fairbanks Diversity Council (FDC) and wanted to take the opportunity to introduce herself to the Council. She reported that the FDC is marching forward and thanked the Council for its support.

Kasey Gillam, Director of Communications, Explore Fairbanks – K. Gillam shared the brand new Explore Fairbanks Winter Guide for 2023-2024, which serves as a companion to their regular Visitors Guide. She stated this supplemental edition speaks to all things winter for those visiting the area, and she highlighted three major activities: aurora viewing, dog mushing, and ice sculpting. She shared that the guide was redesigned and expanded, and improvements were made to make it easier to read, allow for larger and more photos, and enhance the partners' section. She stated they are proud of the redesign and will use a similar approach for next year's Visitors Guide.

Ms. Tidwell asked about distribution of the guide. K. Gillam explained that they have printed 35,000 copies which are distributed by mail to existing partners. She stated individuals can also request via the website to have a guide sent to them, and many locales are provided copies.

Mr. Cleworth asked if a business must be an Explore Fairbanks member to be listed in the guide. K. Gillam stated that businesses must be a partner as well as pay \$50 for the listing.

James Brown – J. Brown stated that he is a civil rights activist within the Alaska human rights community. He stated he would like to speak on behalf of the large number of individuals suffering in the community due to homelessness, alcoholism, and mental illness. He expressed frustration that millions of dollars in grant funding are distributed to various entities, particularly the Rescue

Mission, but are used for other purposes, such as personal vacations. He asked if the Council has seen any significant difference or if the problems are less of an issue since before the money was provided, and he added that the funds have not been used for their intended purpose. He referenced a multi-page affidavit that he was holding. **Mayor Pruhs** directed J. Brown to provide a copy to the City Clerk for distribution to the Council. J. Brown stated that the affidavit outlines alleged grant fraud, tax evasion, embezzlement, internet fraud, falsification of records and financial records, extortion, tyranny, and moral violations committed by several individuals, primarily Pete Kelly, the CEO of the Rescue Mission, as well as John Coghil. He stated that a few people making arbitrary decisions and nepotism appears to be commonplace.

Jasmin Rios (via Zoom) – J. Rios stated that she is speaking on behalf of small business owners in Fairbanks in opposition of Ordinance No. 6264, which proposes an increase to the tobacco tax. She stated that if the ordinance is approved, it will have a detrimental effect on the business community. She asked the Council to imagine a tax hike of 250% in any other area and stated that such a drastic increase will likely force adult tobacco consumers to seek alternative products or purchase online or from non-City businesses. She added that since individuals often make tobacco purchases in conjunction with the purchase of other items, such as groceries and gasoline, the increase may result in lost business for the community. She stated the Council must consider the unintended consequences, such as the growth of illicit markets where underage compliance is unchecked and no transactions are captured for tax revenue.

Mr. Marney expressed confusion with the calculation of a 250% increase. J. Rios responded by stating that 8 multiplied by 250% is 20.

Mr. Cleworth asked whether an individual can legally purchase tobacco products online. J. Rios responded that, as far as she knows, they can.

Jaime Rojas, (via Zoom) – J. Rojas stated that he was representing many local retailers who are members of the National Association of Tobacco Outlets. Regarding Ordinance No. 6264, he stated that adult consumers will often travel to neighboring communities or make purchases online to avoid local tobacco taxes. He stated that this harms local businesses and the City as customers take their purchases outside of the city; he added that illicit markets grow in areas with high taxes. He referenced New York, where an estimated 60% of potential tobacco tax revenue is not collected because of illegal transactions, and that city loses an estimated \$900MM annually. He suggested that a loss of sales by local retailers could lead to employee layoffs and store closures, and he asked the Council to reconsider the ordinance.

Ms. Sprinkle asked J. Rojas if he feels there is a health benefit for people giving up smoking. J. Rojas stated that there is, and alternative products exist for that purpose. He added, however, that increasing the cost is not the right way to get people to stop smoking. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked J. Rojas if he was aware that before this proposal, there was no tax at all on alternatives, such as e-vaping products. J. Rojas responded that he understood that, but he is looking at the overall picture. He stated that those should be considered separately in regard to taxation. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked J. Rojas if he was implying that it would not be a problem to see taxes on vaping products if it was separate from tobacco. J. Rojas said that it is a problem, but that they are focused on the proposed increase to an already overtaxed product. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked J. Rojas if he was aware that most retailers

are within the city. J. Rojas responded affirmatively but stated that his point was that sales would be pushed outside of the city limits.

Mr. Marney asked J. Rojas what his feelings are about the statistics which illustrate that in the Interior of Alaska, an estimated 30% of youth have experimented with e-cigarettes and/or vaping products. J. Rojas acknowledged the statistic but stated that the issue is tied more to flavored vaping products. He commented that a big issue is the lack of enforcement, which the state should give to local jurisdictions. He also suggested that a better approach is simply to increase the annual licensing fee for retailers and improve education campaigns within local schools. **Mr. Marney** stated that the lower cost of the products makes them more accessible to youth, and it would not make sense to penalize a store for the cost of regular operation. He stated that underage consumers would find a way to buy products based on current prices. J. Rojas stated that reported sting operations show a 97% compliance rate with retailers following regulations.

[Clerk Note: The following ten comments were provided during Citizens' Comments via Zoom and portray extreme racist, antisemitic views and vulgar language. The names indicated below are as they were presented on Zoom but may not be accurate. Summaries of these comments are included in the meeting minutes only to provide a more accurate record of the meeting. These comments do not reflect the views, beliefs, or practices of the City of Fairbanks, its elected officials, or employees. The City of Fairbanks does not condone the nature of these comments nor wish to promulgate any of the beliefs expressed by these commenters.]

Robert Hansen (via Zoom) – R. Hansen expressed views about the terrorist attacks of September 11th being committed by Jewish people and encouraged visitors to visit a website. He closed by playing a recording of the audiobook version of Mein Kampf by Adolf Hitler, at which point Mayor Pruhs directed Clerk Snider to mute the individual, as he had ceased to provide direct comments.

Judy Stroyer (via Zoom) – J. Stroyer expressed opinions about affirmative action being a negative endeavor across the country. Accusations were made regarding the destructive impact of ‘baby boomers’ on society, that concepts of equity and racism are attacks against white people, and that Jewish people are overrepresented in positions of power. Derogatory comments were also made regarding a citizen who had previously provided comments.

Mary Phagan (via Zoom) – *No one spoke to state their name for the record. Instead, an audio recording was played that began with comments about the decay of culture. After 10 seconds of no direct commenting by an actual person, Mayor Pruhs directed Clerk Snider to mute the audio.*

Robert Bowers (via Zoom) – R. Bowers read a list of goals from what was referred to as The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion – The Jews Plan for World Domination, 1897 Edition. He stated that these goals have been achieved over the last century and that the Holocaust was a lie. He read excerpts from other Jewish writings and quoted Louis Farrakhan, notable extremist figure, to convey antisemitic sentiments pertaining to things such as the slave trade and the idea of Jewish supremacy. He mentioned the ritual of infant circumcision in the Jewish culture and alleged that Rabbis are pedophiles and vampires. He closed by hailing Hitler and stated: “white power.”

Mayor Pruhs expressed appreciation to those in attendance for their patience with the antisemitic remarks being shared and acknowledged the speakers' Constitutional freedom of speech rights. He affirmed that those commenting will be provided three minutes, with the Citizens' Comments period ending at 7:30 p.m.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if the Council is allowed to ask for the address of the speakers. Attorney Chard stated that speakers are not required to provide an address. **Mayor Pruhs** indicated that there is a space on the signup sheet to reference such, but most individuals simply indicate a general area.

Anders Brievik (via Zoom) – A. Brievik commended the Council for allowing people to exercise their freedom of speech, even for things that others may not like to hear. He spoke of the ritual of infant circumcision in the Jewish culture and the actions of Rabbis. He referred to individuals in these clerical positions by derogatory terms. **Mayor Pruhs** admonished A. Brievik for the use of inappropriate language and profanity, indicating that any further occurrence would result in the remainder of his time being cancelled. A. Brievik apologized for swearing and stated he was disgusted that these people are allowed to run free in the streets, making decisions and telling everyone to get vaccines. He encouraged them to visit a website to learn more.

Andrew Zarro (via Zoom) – A. Zarro stated that black lives matter, trans lives matter, and trans visibility is valid. It is important that the expressed antisemitic views do not take ground. He cannot believe some of the things being said and his trans girlfriend and their trans child had to leave the room. However, as he has been looking up things that they have been shared, he believes it is true. He repeated similar views as the previous speaker, discussing infant circumcision rituals in the Jewish culture.

Henrick Yagoda (via Zoom) – H. Yagoda expressed his views that the terrorist attacks of September 11th were performed by Jewish individuals and referenced two different websites for people to visit for irrefutable evidence of this claim.

Sadie Enwird (via Zoom) – S. Enwird stated they wanted to provide a public service announcement and read alleged excerpts from the Talmud, adding antisemitic commentary throughout their reading. They shared views regarding the ADL [Anti-Defamation League] controlling City Councils, police forces, and intelligence agencies such as the FBI and repeated similar comments to past callers in the meeting.

Jim Adkisson (via Zoom) – J. Adkisson immediately began with derogatory comments aimed at African Americans, Jews, illegal immigrants, and homosexuals. He stated that white privilege does not exist but is rather a lie to excuse anti-white crimes. He directed listeners to the same website as past callers and closed with praise of Hitler and white power.

George Rockwell (via Zoom) – G. Rockwell shared additional antisemitic rhetoric and bemoaned the idea that one is allowed to espouse conservative views against things such as big government, unions, and other topics, yet they are not allowed to speak against Jews or other minorities without being labeled themselves. However, he is finding many like himself are starting to become Nazis and defended the reasoning of such decisions. He stated that the color of one's skin is the uniform in the ultimate battle for the survival of the West and they will have to choose who they side with.

Dominic Lozano, Battalion Chief, Fairbanks Fire Department – D. Lozano shared that he was in his car listening to the meeting on the radio and was disappointed to hear what was being broadcasted. He stated he understands freedom of speech but does not believe that those types of comments deserve to be aired over the radio and internet. He stated that while elected officials may have to listen, others who are listening for actual City business should not have to listen to the extremist comments. He shared information about the public meeting that would soon take place on Senate Bill 88 and stated that there would be a presentation regarding pensions and a return to defined benefits. He spoke to the ordinance being considered that pertained to labor negotiations and stated that the issue comes up every few years. He commented that there have been many variations over the 23 years he has worked for the City, and there has been contention at times over who has the authority to negotiate. He stated he is somewhat apprehensive about too many individuals getting into the weeds of the process and stated that the focus needs to remain on what is best for the City and its employees.

Brynn Butler, City Housing Coordinator – B. Butler shared an update that in the previous month, ten individuals were permanently housed in Fairbanks. She stated that services like this are available to all members of the Fairbanks area. She disavowed the hateful rhetoric of previous commenters and declared such views as not representative of the Fairbanks community. She stated it was disappointing that her daughter, who was attending her first Council meeting, was subject to those comments. She added that a group of concerned citizens is working together on a solution for warming locations this winter.

Before closing Citizens' Comments, **Mayor Pruhs** shared that some of the names of the Zoom commenters were the names of a Norwegian domestic terrorist, the director of the NKDV under Joseph Stalin, and the founder of the American Nazi Party. He expressed appreciation of FPD officers who sent him information regarding the names. He thanked everyone for their patience over the last half hour and stated that the City would likely implement the suggestions of BC Lozano, should similar incidents occur in the future.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA

Mr. Ringstad, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to APPROVE the Agenda and Consent Agenda.

Mayor Pruhs called for objection to the APPROVAL of the Agenda and, hearing none, so ORDERED.

City Clerk Snider read the Consent Agenda into the record.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

a) Regular Meeting Minutes of August 28, 2023

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA.

b) Regular Meeting Minutes of September 11, 2023

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA.

SPECIAL ORDERS

- a) The Fairbanks City Council heard interested citizens concerned with the following marijuana license application for renewal:

Lic. #	DBA	License Type	Licensee	Address
15800	Baked Alaska, LLC	Marijuana Product Manufacturing Facility	Baked Alaska, LLC	2745 Hanson Road, Unit B

Mr. Marney, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to WAIVE PROTEST on the marijuana license application for renewal.

Mayor Pruhs called for testimony. He noted that the only requests for testimony were coming from virtual raised hands on Zoom. Recognizing the names as individuals who had previously made vulgar and offensive remarks that did not pertain City business, he rejected the requests. Hearing no other requests for testimony, he declared Public Testimony closed.

Ms. Sprinkle stated that it would have been nice if the applicant was in attendance. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that he intends to encourage applicants to attend meetings where their applications are being considered so that they are available for questions from the Council.

Ms. Rogers indicated that at some point in their operation, a business owner may have some issue that requires interaction with the City or the Council and spoke to the importance of having a good working relationship.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO WAIVE PROTEST ON THE MARIJUANA LICENSE APPLICATION FOR RENEWAL AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Rogers, Tidwell, Ringstad, Marney, Sprinkle, Cleworth

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

MAYOR’S COMMENTS AND REPORT

- a) Special Reports

Mayor Pruhs invited Dispatch Manager Kristi Merideth to provide a report on the Fairbanks Emergency Communications Center (FECC).

K. Merideth shared that FECC staffing levels have been improving, and they are no longer at rock bottom. She stated they have a total of 11 dispatchers and supervisors; she stated two are fully trained and live in Fairbanks and four, including herself, work remotely and travel to Fairbanks for periods of time. She stated that four employees are about to be released from training, and there are others coming through the application and interview process. She commented that it is difficult to train with a small staff. K. Merideth stated that the department should have a total of 16 dispatchers and supervisors combined, so they are still short-staffed; she added that there are four parttime call-takers which is helpful. She reported that three individuals are scheduled to attend a

Communications Center Management program, which includes four months of online classes and a two-week, in-person training; she stated that a few current employees have gone through the training, and it is well worth the investment. She stated that when things settle down, she intends to send some newer staff to a Communications Training Officer program, which will help fill gaps in department training, give staff additional perspectives on key components of their work, and set them up for greater success. K. Merideth stated that the FECC has implemented new Artificial Intelligence software which enables them to create simulated, less-common scenarios and monitor how dispatchers handle situations. She stated that another application they will soon use will help analyze what types of calls they get and when so they can adjust staffing schedules to best serve the needs of the FECC. She stated that while things are improving, staff is still tired, stressed, and overwhelmed by the long stretch of bare bones staffing and significant overtime, which has impacted their work-life balance and job satisfaction. She stated that the demands of their jobs are heavy, and they need time off. She added, however, that the staff has worked well together to adjust schedules to accommodate one another.

Mr. Ringstad asked for clarification on total staff numbers. K. Merideth explained that they currently have 11 total dispatchers and supervisors, but the FECC is budgeted for 16 fulltime positions. She stated that they also have four parttime positions that help fill in gaps. She stated that three new applicants are ready to send for background screening, and she hopes to hire them. **Mr. Ringstad** asked about the longevity of the parttime employees. K. Merideth stated that they have been there about a year and are attending school or have other jobs; she added that they change their schedules often to help support the fulltime dispatchers. She commented that there has been only one day in her 20 years with the FECC that the department has been fully staffed.

Mr. Marney asked whether the lateral bonus implemented in recent years has been helpful with recruitment. K. Merideth stated that there are three employees about to receive their first half of the bonus, so it has been successful.

Mayor Pruhs encouraged the Council to visit the call center and stated that there are more employees there than in the recent past. He commented that there is a synergy that continues to grow, and he recommended that Council members say hello and see the operation for themselves.

Ms. Rogers mentioned Linda Pitka, a recent graduate from Effie Kokrine Charter School, who is considering what opportunities she would like to pursue. She stated that she visited the police department and City Hall with L. Pitka, and the staff at the call center was very welcoming and invited L. Pitka to come back for a ride-along experience. **Ms. Rogers** praised K. Merideth's leadership as she continues to evolve her approach in meeting the needs of the FECC.

Mr. Ringstad asked how, during this period of understaffing, the FECC's relationship has been with the other organizations they dispatch for. K. Merideth stated that they receive questions about staffing challenges, since those entities pay for the FECC's service. She stated that the FECC does not have the option to not answer the phone; however, their short-staffing situation has not changed the number of people answering the phones, just the number of hours those employees are working each week. She commented that sometimes response times are slower, but that is typically a result of abnormally high call volumes. She stated that the FECC has also experienced spoof callers, similar to the Zoom situation earlier, which causes disruptions as well. She stated that not much has changed in the fulfillment of department duties, but staff has been increasingly exhausted.

Mayor Pruhs thanked K. Merideth for her report. He reminded the Council to submit their legislative and capital priorities to him as soon as possible. He reviewed a report from Building Official Clem Clooten which provided a status update on the abatement process for several properties discussed earlier in the summer. He stated that the list shrinks and grows, but seeing certain addresses drop off the report is progress. He invited the Council to contact C. Clooten with any additional questions. He stated that the City will be working with individuals from the Borough to create a unified set of parameters for property abatement issues, such as trash accumulation.

Ms. Sprinkle asked how the Borough getting involved would impact enforcement. **Mayor Pruhs** explained that the Borough and City each have their own mechanisms for enforcement, but they want consistency. He stated the question they want to answer is “What triggers it?” He commented that he believes strongly in property rights, but there are locations within the City that are more than half covered in junk. He stated the Council would be asked to approve items as they come up.

Mr. Marney asked if there had been any interest in the open position at the Building Department since the Council approved the hiring bonus and relocation incentive. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that he is not sure but will follow up. He thanked everyone again for enduring the inappropriate public comments from earlier and reaffirmed his commitment to handle things differently in the future.

COUNCILMEMBERS’ COMMENTS

Ms. Sprinkle shared that she was happy to hear the positive update about FECC and stated that it stresses her to think about staff being overworked to the point of exhaustion. She expressed appreciation for the update on abatements. In regard to the earlier incident under Citizens’ Comments, she stated she is upset and distressed that the community is subject to those comments. She stated it was outright hate, and she hopes there is something that can be done about it.

Ms. Tidwell thanked D. Lozano for bringing up the event that would happen the following evening. She stated it will be at the pipeline training center, and it is an opportunity to engage and educate the public about pension benefits that exist across many industries. She stated these are the kinds of incentives that keep people in their jobs.

Mr. Marney stated that he would defer to the second round of Council Members’ Comments.

Ms. Rogers expressed appreciation for the presentation from Borough staff during the earlier Work Session. She stated there is a good chance of not repeating mistakes of the past and moving forward in a positive way. She mentioned that on her tour with L. Pitka, they were surprised and thrilled with the accessibility of various departments. She stated she believes there are many older teens in the community who would benefit from a mentoring program and be exposed to City operations, which may trigger greater interest in volunteering, employment, or civic engagement. She stated the public comments from earlier were frustrating, but she is proud of how they got through it. She spoke in favor of the Mayor taking the suggestions of D. Lozano should it happen again in the future. She also spoke to the issue of low voter turnout. She stated that it can sound harsh to refer to the community as disengaged, but it is not inaccurate. She stated she hopes to see more involvement through participation in the election process and for individuals to have their voices heard.

Mr. Cleworth expressed fascination that the group that commented earlier felt that a City Council meeting in Fairbanks, Alaska was where they should try and spread their hateful messages. Regarding ADA compliance on Minnie Street, he stated that item is on the agenda for the FAST Planning board. He stated it has been pushed back and is an expensive project, but it is going to get done. He stated the sidewalk problems will be addressed at that time, and a lot of resources will be put into that area. He stated he is not aware of the specific pothole that was referenced, but he hopes it will be addressed by Public Works. **Mr. Cleworth** stated that he would like to know more about how easy it is or is not for individuals to purchase tobacco products online before Ordinance No. 6264 comes back for public hearing at the next Council meeting. He stated that shops on Fort Wainwright are outside of the City's tax umbrella, and it is possible that someone could set up shop outside of City limits. He stated that people could potentially buy from those locations to resell under the table, but it seems unlikely with the amount of increase the Council is considering. He stated that his question has more to do with online purchases. He stated that one person who gave comments indicated it was very easy, but he is not sure that is the case. **Mr. Cleworth** thanked K. Merideth for her report and for her creative approach to challenges in her department. He recalled past conversations where she had been authorized to over-hire to account for attrition. He encouraged the Mayor to invite the Director of Public Works and City Engineer to provide a response to the Downtown Plan, particularly to some of the items pertaining to bicycle paths on City roads and how such things would impact snow removal. He asked whether the pension meeting the following evening would be only a presentation or if it would be open for public comment. **Ms. Tidwell** indicated that she has not seen an agenda, but it is open to the public; she stated she is confident there will be a Q&A period. She stated the event is being put on by the Alaska Public Pension Coalition, and there are a lot of members of the community who would like a return to a defined benefit plan. She stated she expects the event will be well-attended. **Mr. Cleworth** spoke to the plan presented in Juneau to return to a defined benefit system; he stated it had some pitfalls, and it would be nice to have an open discussion about what those pitfalls were. He stated the last thing he would want to see happen is to get into a plan that generates more red ink. He stated they need to consider what other states are doing, because there are some that implemented a similar plan a couple years ago and they are already having issues. He added that he hopes to attend the event.

Mr. Ringstad stated that he drives down Minnie Street a lot, and the pothole that was referenced earlier just showed up recently. He stated he is not sure what caused it, but it was big enough that people had to go into the opposite lane to get around it. He stated he assumes it will be taken care of soon. He noted that the appointment of his nephew to the Planning Commission passed on the Consent Agenda. He stated he is happy to see another generation get involved with public service.

Mayor Pruhs indicated that the next Council would be after the upcoming election. He stated regardless of whether Mr. Marney and Mr. Ringstad win or lose, they have been excellent to work with, and they should be proud of their service to the citizens of Fairbanks.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a) Ordinance No. 6262 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Chapter 42 Labor Relations and Negotiations, Section 42.1 Labor Relations and Section 42.2 Labor Negotiations. Introduced by Council Member Cleworth. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6262.

Mayor Pruhs called for testimony and hearing none, declared Public Testimony closed.

Ms. Tidwell indicated that she would like more clarity on the addition of the new language in Sec. 42-2(b)(2). Attorney Chard stated that the language mirrors the language in Sec. 42-2(b)(1), which pertains to notice that must be given to the Council at the start of labor negotiations for a contract that is set to expire. He stated that the new language will require the same notification for any proposed amendments during a contract period. **Ms. Tidwell** asked to confirm that the language would not require the Mayor to get permission from the Council to negotiate with a union and that he would still hold that executive authority. Attorney Chard confirmed that was correct. He stated the Mayor would still have the responsibility and authority to negotiate. He explained that the new language clarifies that the requirement to notify the Council of discussions regarding potential amendments mid-contract is the same as it would be for full contract negotiations. He stated that notification could be as simple as sending the Council a short message. **Mayor Pruhs** added that, by Code, the Council can replace the Mayor as the negotiator. He recalled that when he served on the Council, there was a situation where the Mayor at the time was not listening to the guidance the Council provided, so they replaced him as the negotiator with the City Attorney. **Ms. Tidwell** clarified that she just wanted to ensure the Mayor would continue to hold the authority to address situations that need prompt action and that this would not inhibit the process.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORINDNACE NO. 6262 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Cleworth, Sprinkle, Tidwell, Marney, Ringstad, Rogers
NAYS: None
Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6262 ADOPTED.

NEW BUSINESS

- a) Ordinance No. 6263 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Section 2-119, Order of Business. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs and Council Member Cleworth.

ADVANCED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- b) Ordinance No. 6264 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Section 74-152 by Increasing the Tobacco Excise Tax. Introduced by Council Members Marney and Sprinkle.

ADVANCED on the CONSENT AGENDA

DISCUSSION ITEMS (Information and Reports)

Mr. Ringstad stated that he had no reports.

Mr. Marney shared that the next Explore Fairbanks Board of Directors meeting would take place on Wednesday, September 27 at 2 p.m.

Ms. Tidwell reported that there was a Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting recently, and they allowed significant time for public comment on the Steese Highway Action Corridor Plan. She stated that 100% of the public comments were in opposition to ore hauling. She shared that a few more meetings have been scheduled based on recommendations to the TAC. She stated that the meetings are recorded and are available to anyone who was unable to attend.

Ms. Sprinkle shared that the Polaris Working Group will meet in a week.

Ms. Rogers asked Mayor Pruhs to provide an account of the meetings they both attended regarding a crisis stabilization center and the Polaris Building. **Mayor Pruhs** shared that they met with Representative Stapp and Crisis Now Coordinator Brenda McFarlane. He explained that the State received \$53MM in an opioid settlement, and they do not believe it should be piecemealed out over years. He stated they would like to see a large appropriation for the City to establish a crisis stabilization center. He stated that at the opioid summit in May, everyone present, including those from state and federal entities, agreed that such a center needs to be a priority in Fairbanks. He shared that Representative Stapp is on the House Finance Committee, and he will be putting it on his list of capital projects for the Governor. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that the “Polaris Working Group 2.0” has begun, and they realized the need to update the mission for the site. He stated that Explore Fairbanks is not looking to create a public building for the arts or conventions, and this has allowed the group to reboot and start considering development ideas for the block. He shared that the group had a great discussion, welcomed all thoughts, and will not stop until they have identified the best use for the space. He added that it would be great to have concepts to share with developers. He stated that just like the original group, all are welcome to participate, and they look forward to having many voices contribute.

Mr. Cleworth shared that the FAST Planning Board met recently in a long but very productive meeting. He shared that some money was freed up at the state level, and Fairbanks was allocated a portion of the funds, with caveats for its use. He stated that among the list of potential projects was converting certain one-way streets to two-way streets, which freed up \$150,000 after being voted down. He stated that the Engineering Department is reviewing better uses for those funds, one of which may be addressing ADA-compliance for sidewalks. He added that another possibility is signalization on Barnette Street. He explained that when Cushman Street was reconstructed, certain stoplights were deemed unnecessary and were eliminated. He stated that stoplights are costly to maintain, and parts can be difficult to acquire when certain equipment is discontinued.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TO THE CITY COUNCIL

- a) Fairbanks Diversity Council Meeting Minutes of August 8, 2023

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA.

- b) Recommendation for Appointment to the FNSB Planning Commission

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA.

COUNCILMEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Marney shared that he attended Lieutenant Cory Rupe's retirement celebration. He stated that Lt. Rupe has been a remarkable and decorated officer, who is loved by the DA's office and his coworkers. He stated that FPD has lost a great officer but wished him the best. Regarding the public comments earlier in the night, **Mr. Marney** stated that is not the Fairbanks he knows. He expressed hope that the Council would not hear such things ever again.

Ms. Sprinkle shared her excitement about the completion of the 5th Avenue project and thanked all those who were involved.

Mr. Cleworth spoke about the difficulty of running for and serving in public office. He stated he appreciates anyone who throws their hat into the ring and runs for office. He thanked Mr. Marney and Mr. Ringstad for their service and wished them luck, whatever the election results may be.

Ms. Tidwell, Mr. Ringstad, and Ms. Rogers each stated that they had no comments.

CITY CLERK'S REPORT

Clerk Snider reminded everyone that Tuesday October 3 is Election Day. She stated that some polling locations have changed, and citizens can check with any Clerk's Office or the City's website for more information. She highlighted Ordinance No. 6263, which was ADVANCED on the Consent Agenda. She stated that the ordinance will consolidate the Council Members' Comments and Committee Reports sections of the agenda. In regard to rules for Citizens' Comments, Clerk Snider stated that there are other rules and procedures not in the Code, such as parameters for testifying over Zoom. She explained that the City website states that individuals must sign up in advance if they wish to speak during Citizens' Comments or a public hearing. She stated that they have been lax with those rules and have allowed people to testify even if they had not signed up in advance, as long as time permitted. She stated that they do not have to allow people to speak who did not sign up in advance. She added that there is room to tighten up the rules, but the rules should be applied consistently.

CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Attorney Chard stated that there are times when it is easy to celebrate their success as a community and other times when public service is difficult. He stated he appreciates the work of the Council.

EXECUTIVE SESSIONS

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to ENTER an Executive Session to discuss *Roberts, et al. v. City of Fairbanks, et al.*, Settlement Discussion and another Executive Session for a Litigation Update, Discussion, and Guidance.

Mayor Pruhs called for objection and hearing none, so ORDERED.

Mayor Pruhs called for a brief recess, after which the Council reconvened in Executive Session.

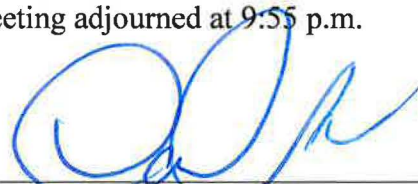
- a) *Roberts, et al. v. City of Fairbanks, et al., Settlement Discussion. (Entered at 8:45 p.m.)*
- b) *Litigation Update, Discussion, and Guidance. (Entered at 9:18 p.m.)*

The City Council met in Executive Sessions to discuss the above items and provide direction to legal counsel, but no action was taken. The regular meeting resumed at 9:54 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT


Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to ADJOURN the meeting.

Hearing no objection, **Mayor Pruhs** declared the meeting adjourned at 9:55 p.m.



DAVID PRUHS, MAYOR

ATTEST:



D. DANVIERLE SNIDER, MMC, CITY CLERK

Transcribed by: CC