



FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, MAY 20, 2024
FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
800 CUSHMAN STREET, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

The City Council convened at 6:30 p.m. on the above date, following a 5:30 p.m. graduation ceremony for the Citizen Engagement Academy, 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 David Pruhs presiding and with 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
 Michael Sanders, Chief of Staff
 Thomas Chard, City Attorney (remotely)
 Margarita Bell, Chief Financial Officer
 Ron Dupee, Police Chief (remotely)
 Andrew Coccaro, Fire Chief
 Jake Merritt, Human Resources Director
 Kristi Merideth, FECC Manager
 Brenda McFarlane, Crisis Now Coordinator
 Brynn Butler, Housing Coordinator (remotely)

INVOCATION

The invocation was given by City Clerk Danyielle Snider.

FLAG SALUTATION

At the request of Mayor Pruhs, Chief of Staff Michael Sanders led the flag salutation.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS

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

Juanita Webb, Chair of the Fairbanks Diversity Council – J. Webb provided an update about the Fairbanks Diversity Council (FDC), including details about its recent meetings, better attendance, and signature projects. She shared information about the upcoming Race Against Racism, the Juneteenth event, and the FDC's hosting of a "Human Library" event during Golden Days in July.

Mayor Pruhs and **Ms. Rogers** both spoke praise of J. Webb's leadership and involvement.

Ms. Tidwell asked for more information about the Juneteenth event. J. Webb indicated that more details will be provided in the near future but to mark calendars for June 15 from noon to 4:00 p.m.

Ms. Sprinkle suggested that J. Webb reach out to Greg Hill to collaborate on the Human Library.

Jomo Stewart, President of Fairbanks Economic Development Corporation (FEDC) – J. Stewart gave an update on the FEDC, including details about the following programs, projects, and events:

- The Young Professional Council professional development half-day summit
- A spring session of the FEDC's Small Business Accelerator
- Community Economic Development Strategy document
- The Alaska Defense Forum taking place in August
- The Chef at the Market summer series
- A new event referred to as Wood Energy Conference
- Creating a "Walkable Shopping Directory"
- The replanting of birch trees that came from the roof of the Polaris Building

J. Stewart shared that he had recently engaged with local education matters, specifically the plans to close Ben Eielson Jr/Sr High School and migrate students to schools in North Pole.

Ms. Rogers asked J. Stewart if he was aware that some students who attend Ben Eielson are not military families but live in the Salcha area, as her family did years ago. She noted that it is not a military facility but a community school that happened to be located on the Air Force base.

Mr. Ringstad discussed seeing a recent interview where J. Stewart spoke on many important issues facing Fairbanks, particularly the cost of utilities. J. Stewart shared that he had been invited to give a presentation about Fairbanks to a Rotary group in Anchorage. He explained that although a windstorm had impacted flights that day and prevented him from attending the engagement, he spent time considering what issues affect both Fairbanks and Southcentral Alaska, in order to explore solutions. He discussed a shift of direction in energy supply flows. J. Stewart stated that the FEDC had contracted with Information Analysis to perform a baseline economic assessment of Fairbanks and that they are working on a draft report to share with the community in mid-June.

Ms. Sprinkle asked where else, besides City Hall, a Polaris birch tree was planted and wondered whose idea it was to replant them. J. Stewart stated that they had hoped to salvage at least one tree from the top of the building but ended up saving several. He added that multiple individuals had a similar idea to have them relocated and that the plan was to provide one each for the City of Fairbanks, City of North Pole, and the Borough. He shared that there may be one or two trees remaining, which they would love to raffle off as a fundraiser for the Arbor Day Society or another local nonprofit organization. J. Stewart stated that it would be neat if the new structure at the site of the Polaris Building had an atrium at the top where one of the trees could be planted.

Mr. Cleworth asked J. Stewart if the FEDC has received inquiries from major retailers about coming to Fairbanks. J. Stewart indicated that it has been a long time since such an inquiry has occurred. **Mr. Cleworth** asked whether the FEDC goes out to make those inquiries. J. Stewart shared information about the FEDC's strategic planning efforts.

Clerk Snider reported that technical issues were occurring with the overhead projector.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA

Mr. Ringstad, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to APPROVE the agenda and consent agenda.

Mr. Marney pulled Ordinance No. 6282, item 12(b) under New Business, from the consent agenda.

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

Clerk Snider read the consent agenda, as amended, into the record.

SPECIAL ORDERS

a) The Fairbanks City Council held a public hearing and considered the following marijuana license application for renewal:

Lic. #	DBA	License Type	Licensee	Address
13479	North Star Fire	Standard Marijuana Cultivation Facility	North Star Fire, LLC	3780 Leasure Street, Suite 3

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

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

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

YEAS: Marney, Ringstad, Cleworth, Sprinkle, Rogers, Tidwell
NAYS: None
Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

MAYOR’S COMMENTS AND REPORT

Mayor Pruhs congratulated the graduates of the Citizen Engagement Academy which concluded earlier in the evening. He invited Crisis Now Coordinator Brenda McFarlane to give a report.

B. McFarlane introduced Kris Frey who has worked at a local television station for over 20 years and helped produce a commercial to promote awareness and access to the Mobile Crisis Team (MCT). She explained that grant money was available to use for advertising and that in-kind donations from K. Frey via KTVF and KXDF had allowed them to produce the commercial at no cost. She shared that it is currently airing on TV, and they hope to see it shared on more platforms soon. B. McFarlane read the commercial’s script, described the video, and spoke of the overall goals of the campaign. She thanked everyone involved in the MCT for their commitment to serving

those in need within the Fairbanks community. She noted that in its two and a half years of existence, the MCT have never been unable to answer a call and maintain 24/7 availability.

J. Rogers spoke highly of K. Frey's professionalism, connections, and commitment and shared some history of her involvement with various programs and campaigns throughout the years.

Mayor Pruhs shared that in the previous week, Public Works performed cleanup work at a property on 23rd Avenue and Rickert Street. He reported that over 60 tons of debris were removed over a two-day period in an effort to improve that block. He invited David van den Berg (Executive Director of the Downtown Association of Fairbanks, DTA), J. Stewart (FEDC), and Kuba Grzeda, (Deputy Chief of Staff to the Borough Mayor) to share their thoughts on Resolution No. 5116.

D. van den Berg noted that this is his third time speaking on the topic at City Council meetings. He stated that the Downtown Fairbanks 2040 Plan, which will soon be officially adopted, contains many items that will require resources and funding. He pointed out that economic development is the only shared power between the City and the Borough that is identified within the Plan and, as such, necessitates shared coordination rather than existing solely within a department of one local municipality. D. van den Berg explained that many entities around the state have active ARDORs (Alaska Regional Development Organizations) in place, which have success in acquiring funds through less-common sources primarily because of their joint approach. He suggested that it might be time to assess the economic development capacity of Fairbanks.

J. Rogers recalled that meetings in years past left her with the impression that they did not qualify to have an ARDOR. D. van den Berg acknowledged that he is not the best person to elaborate on that, but to his understanding, the Interior has an ARDOR, although it is housed at the Borough.

Mr. Ringstad shared his recollection that ARDORs were initially set up regionally, to avoid overlap and duplication of efforts, which is why the Borough was established as the entity for that.

J. Stewart indicated that the FEDC has not taken an official position on the resolution but that he personally supports it. He identified grants and the existing Economic Development Commission as the two significant issues at hand. He described his research in ARDORs, noting that the FEDC had interest in becoming the official ARDOR for the Fairbanks area. J. Stewart stated that the Fairbanks region is the only place in Alaska where the ARDOR is a municipal government, which he described as peculiar. He discussed the importance of having appropriate placements on a joint commission to ensure needs and interests are best represented.

Ms. Sprinkle asked J. Stewart if he was implying that the FEDC should have a seat at the table. J. Stewart indicated that if he was crafting a joint Economic Development Commission it would have a representative from the Borough, City of Fairbanks, City of North Pole, FEDC, Explore Fairbanks, Downtown Association of Fairbanks, and any other entities that are on the ground doing economic development activities in the community. **Ms. Sprinkle** suggested that the resolution list specific entities as desired representatives. J. Stewart stated that doing so would be very reasonable for what is supposed to be an area-wide economic development engine.

Mr. Ringstad pointed out that while some organizations are specifically named, others such as the Chamber of Commerce were not. J. Stewart replied that it felt long overdue for both cities and the Borough to review the makeup of the commission. He discussed those currently serving.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if he was pursuing having the ARDOR reassigned to the FEDC. J. Stewart clarified that he had only been tasked with researching the topic.

K. Grzeda explained that both Borough Mayor Ward and Chief of Staff Williams were ill, so he was there to discuss what the proposed agreement does and does not do. He shared information about second class boroughs, of which FNSB is, being limited to providing economic development on a non-areawide basis only. He clarified that “non-areawide” means that the areas within the boundaries of the City of Fairbanks and the City North Pole would be excluded. K. Grzeda stated that the State Legislature allowed for exemptions to the limitations in 2004, provided the three entities entered into an agreement. He explained that such an agreement would allow funds collected throughout the borough to be spent on economic development on an areawide basis. He confirmed that this does not grant the Borough areawide power and that the cities retain economic development authority within their respective boundaries. K. Grzeda stated that the agreement entered into in 2004 is outdated and does not clarify how the entities would jointly provide for projects, which is what the new agreement aims to fix. He noted that the Borough signed the new agreement a year ago, and the City of North Pole agreed in September 2023. He explained that the Borough Assembly is scheduled to adopt its budget for the new fiscal year at its next meeting, and the agreement is necessary to allow the Borough to continue spending funds for economic development within city limits. K. Grzeda stated that without the agreement, the Borough would have to shift its focus outside of the city, which the Borough Mayor does not believe is in the best interest of the community. He added that not having the agreement in place would also require an amendment to the Borough’s budget to account for the shift of funding plans.

Mr. Ringstad asked if the agreement would mean the Borough can continue to spend money within the city and what current activities would be impacted. K. Grzeda stated that the Borough provides funding to the FEDC, and a change could complicate the FEDC’s activities. J. Stewart explained that his office is within city boundaries, and funding for the FEDC comes from the City and Borough. He cited the 2004 oversight when the three Mayors were not formally authorized to enter into the agreement at the time; he stated the goal is to rectify that. J. Stewart confirmed that the FEDC’s funding from the Borough would still be provided, but he would have to segregate funds and monitor what is spent on various programs and activities within and outside of the city. **Mr. Ringstad** pointed out that by that logic, other changes would be made at the Borough level for activities within the city. J. Stewart shared that, to his knowledge, the Borough Attorney has raised concerns since 2004 about the lack of formal authorization by the respective City Councils and Assembly. He explained that Mayor Ward chose to rectify the issue by his request to Mayor Pruhs to introduce the resolution. **Mr. Ringstad** referenced the activities that J. Stewart had shared earlier in the meeting, where FEDC would be pursuing companies and organizations to consider economic development interest in Fairbanks, and asked how such work was funded. J. Stewart stated that it comes from his regular budget, some of which comes from the Borough.

Mr. Cleworth referenced current tax collection practices, where the Borough does not assess a specific line item for economic development. He asked if that meant that any funds being spent for that purpose were simply being allocated from its general fund. K. Grzeda stated he believes

that is correct. J. Stewart stated that as he understands, the Borough collects taxes specifically for economic development purposes. **Mr. Cleworth** indicated that the Council needs confirmation on the parameters of Borough taxes regarding economic development. He stated he would like to know more about the mechanics of the Borough's tax cap and how funds are allocated. He expressed concern about the makeup of the commission, a concern which he believes is shared by other Councilmembers. He stated that he thinks the Borough would be open to some changes on that subject and suggested that it would be good if the Mayors could sit down and sort it out.

Ms. Sprinkle stated that nothing was previously conveyed about a timeline for approval, nor any consequences for not doing so by a certain time. She indicated that the Council wants to do things right, ask questions, and get answers. K. Grzeda acknowledged the short turnaround and that the authorization in the resolution is needed to keep certain funds in the budget as currently proposed. He committed to getting answers for Mr. Cleworth's concerns on taxes and confirmed that the Mayors can work together on commission makeup.

Mr. Ringstad discussed the status quo of 20 years and that there is a difference between needs and wants. He acknowledged that the Borough may want to have the resolution passed immediately for a clean budgeting process, but that is not the same as needing it done right now. He cited the Council's recent heavy discussions and indicated that concerns have not been answered or resolved. He stated that he does not see how 20 years of precedence should change if the Council needed more time for consideration. K. Grzeda affirmed the sentiment and reiterated that the Borough Attorney advised that the item needed to be resolved before the next budget cycle.

Ms. Tidwell asked to confirm that the result of the Council not passing the resolution immediately would be that the Borough would not spend funds within the city for economic development; she also asked about the amounts involved. K. Grzeda stated that he believes this is what the Borough Attorney will recommend and noted that \$350,000 to the FEDC is the amount being impacted.

Mayor Pruhs concluded his comments by acknowledging FECC Manager Kristi Merideth's presence at the meeting; he noted that she had just completed two audits for her department.

COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. Cleworth, Ms. Tidwell, and Mr. Marney each indicated that they had no comments.

Ms. Rogers discussed the Polaris Building birch trees project and thanked everyone involved.

Ms. Sprinkle applauded the work done on the property at 23rd Avenue and Rickert Street. She expressed appreciation for the City being proactive about nuisance properties.

Mr. Ringstad spoke about the same property as Ms. Sprinkle and shared how several people have complimented the City for taking recent action there and elsewhere. He noted that despite all those inhabiting that property and the activities taking place, there was no habitable structure onsite. He discussed how neighboring families should not have to live next to such a situation. He concluded by praising B. Butler's work.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a) Resolution No. 5116 – A Resolution of the City of Fairbanks Authorizing an Agreement Between the Fairbanks North Star Borough, the City of North Pole, and the City of Fairbanks to Jointly Provide for Economic Development. POSTPONED from the Regular Meeting of April 22, 2024.

At the April 22, 2024 regular meeting, Mr. Cleworth, seconded by Ms. Sprinkle, moved to APPROVE Resolution No. 5116. The motion remained on the floor.

Mr. Cleworth asked if it would be prudent to add a section to outline a plan to work with the Borough and the City of North Pole to determine an appropriate makeup of commission members. **Ms. Rogers** spoke in favor of the suggestion. **Mr. Ringstad** agreed and addressed his concern over the narrow scope of associated entities and other vague language. He expressed frustration that they were originally told it was not an urgent matter, only to now be asked to approve it before the meeting concluded. He pointed out that if the concern is a change to the Borough's budget, the Borough Assembly can amend its budget. He stated that the agreement feels premature and inadequate in explaining what is being requested of the City as a partner.

Ms. Sprinkle acknowledged that many big conversations for the endeavor will occur within the commission. She pointed out that while the commission is referenced multiple times in the resolution, she does not see it mentioned within the supporting document. She expressed concern, given its perceived significance, at the current commission's poor attendance and participation.

Ms. Tidwell noted the worry that FEDC funding may be in jeopardy or of restricted use. She agreed that the sudden urgency was unsettling and spoke in support of Mr. Cleworth's suggestions.

Mr. Ringstad stated that the City provides money to the FEDC without conveying restrictions, which makes it perplexing to hear that the Borough would.

Mr. Cleworth acknowledged that the Borough identified a mistake in how the agreement has been handled and that it has the right to try to correct it. He stated that if the taxes used to provide funds to the FEDC are coming from the Borough's general fund, collected on an areawide basis, he is unsure if the restrictions are appropriate. He admitted that the Council needs to learn more about the money side of the issue but applauded the administration for trying to correct the problem.

Ms. Tidwell shared that she has learned through her attendance at the FEDC's Board of Directors meetings that funding from the City and the Borough are very different and that the FEDC is mindful of the parameters.

Mr. Marney stated that the tax issue deeply concerns him, and the Council is right to question it.

Mayor Pruhs commented that the Borough Mayor came to speak with the Council some months prior about the matter, and there was no sense of urgency conveyed nor indication that funding for the FEDC would be at risk. He discussed the carrot versus stick approach and cited challenges with working with the Borough on other issues over the last six months.

Ms. Sprinkle stated that she was told that the agreement had been presented to the City last year. **Mayor Pruhs** clarified that he received the agreement last year, that he had problems with it, that work on it began four months ago, and that the Borough Mayor came to speak to the Council about it three months ago. He added that two months ago the Borough increased its tobacco tax rates, negatively impacting businesses within the city which, as far as he was concerned, kicked everything out the window. He stated that at that point, everyone took a step back and trust levels went down. He asked if the Council wanted to get this right or simply patch it and let the Borough fix it. **Mayor Pruhs** gave examples of different paths forward, explaining that the Borough could choose to fund the FEDC contingent upon the agreement being finalized and approved by the City, or it can choose to not fund the FEDC with the understanding that if an agreement is reached, it could then allocate the funds through a budget amendment. He declared that he does not foresee the Borough shutting down the FEDC and that the organization has reserves to bridge the gap. He stated he found it reprehensible that the City was told three business days ago that this was an issue of funding the FEDC or not. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked if postponement would mean that the FEDC would not receive the \$350,000, or if there would simply be restrictions. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that if it was up to him, he would use one of the two approaches he previously outlined.

Mr. Cleworth asked if the Mayor preferred that the resolution be postponed until the issues and questions could be resolved. **Mayor Pruhs** asked if the Council thought it could be fixed presently. **Mr. Cleworth** stated that some things are unclear, and the Borough should be able to budget in a way that does not harm the FEDC's finances and give the Council time to do what it needs to do.

Mayor Pruhs expressed his belief that every Councilmember supports entering into a joint economic development agreement with the Borough and the City of North Pole. He conveyed opposition to rushing things and urged the Council to wait until it could be done correctly.

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Mr. Ringstad**, moved to POSTPONE Resolution No. 5116 to the second regular meeting in June.

Mr. Ringstad asked if the City had heard anything from the City of North Pole, given that it is a three-way agreement and that the City of North Pole had already passed its own similar resolution.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO POSTPONE RESOLUTION NO. 5116 TO THE REGULAR MEETING OF JUNE 24, 2024, AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Sprinkle, Ringstad, Marney, Rogers, Cleworth

NAYS: Tidwell

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Resolution No. 5116 POSTPONED.

Mayor Pruhs shared that prior to his recent conversation with Borough Chief of Staff Williams and Deputy Chief of Staff Grzeda, his preference was to see the resolution postponed indefinitely. He expressed trust in the Borough administration to work with the City to see the issue resolved.

- b) Ordinance No. 6279 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Section 22-28(b) to Create Parity Between City and Borough Election Worker Pay. Introduced by Mayor

Pruhs and Council Members Cleworth, Rogers, Marney, and Ringstad. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6279.

Mayor Pruhs called for testimony and hearing none, declared Public Testimony closed. *[Clerk Note: This call for Public Testimony occurred out of order on the agenda, after the ordinance had been ADOPTED. The omission was immediately rectified.]*

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6279 AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6279 ADOPTED.

Ms. Rogers addressed the potential conflict of interest for Ms. Sprinkle, who she understands is an election worker and had just participated in the vote on Ordinance No. 6279. She acknowledged that City Attorney Tom Chard had provided guidance on the matter previously but asked for clarification. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that because the dollar amount was less than 1% of Ms. Sprinkle's annual income, she had no financial interest and thus it did not meet the criteria for a conflict, although Attorney Chard had suggested that Ms. Sprinkle not be listed as a sponsor. **Ms. Rogers** indicated that she believed the threshold for a conflict of interest was lower than Mayor Pruhs had cited. **Mr. Ringstad** pointed out that Ms. Sprinkle is not paid anything by the City for her election work. Clerk Snider clarified for the record that after the issue was initially raised at a prior meeting, it was later confirmed that Ms. Sprinkle is not a City election worker, that she works at a Borough-only polling place, and as such has no conflict of interest in the matter.

Ms. Tidwell shared for the record that she too works at a Borough-only polling place and confirmed that Attorney Chard had advised that no conflict existed, though it would be best for neither her nor Ms. Sprinkle to sponsor the ordinance. **Mayor Pruhs** praised the work done by local election workers and the prevailing trust in the accuracy of election results in local races.

- c) Ordinance No. 6280 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Chapter 14, Article XIII, Business Licensing, to Allow for Youth Business Licenses and Amending the City Schedule of Fees and Charges for Services. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs and Council Members Ringstad, Marney, Tidwell, Sprinkle, Rogers, and Cleworth. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6280.

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

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6280 AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6280 ADOPTED.

- d) Ordinance No. 6281 – An Ordinance Amending Fairbanks General Code Section 50-289 Paid Funeral Leave. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs and Council Members Sprinkle, Tidwell, Rogers, Marney, Ringstad, and Cleworth. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Tidwell**, moved to ADOPT Ordinance No. 6281.

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

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT ORDINANCE NO. 6281 AS FOLLOWS:

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6281 ADOPTED.

NEW BUSINESS

- a) Resolution No. 5121 – A Resolution in Recognition of the Lathrop High School Academic Decathlon Team for Winning a National Title. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs and Council Members Cleworth and Sprinkle.

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA.

- b) Ordinance No. 6282 – An Ordinance Amending the 2024 Operating and Capital Budgets for the Second Time. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

Ms. Sprinkle, seconded by **Mr. Marney**, moved to ADVANCE Ordinance No. 6282.

Mr. Marney stated that the overtime issue at the Fairbanks Fire Department (FFD) has weighed on him greatly. He discussed many conversations the Council has had since he began serving and added that he felt like an enabler. He addressed the problems of mandatory overtime, burnout, turnover, and training young people – sometimes for years – only to see them leave. **Mr. Marney** expressed the need for the Council to be better stewards of taxpayer money through reducing FFD overtime. He noted that the Police Department has the next highest overtime costs, which is one-third of the FFD's. He affirmed that the City cannot afford to continue on the same path.

Mr. Ringstad asked how much of the budgeted \$900,000 for FFD overtime had already been spent. CFO Bell stated that to date, \$682,211 has been used. **Mr. Ringstad** noted that amounts to approximately \$150,000 a month. CFO Bell confirmed that about \$217,000 is left and that the department does have some savings in wages and benefits. **Mr. Ringstad** agreed with Mr. Marney

that the City cannot keep throwing money at the issue and expect that something will change. He expressed a desire to see the department function within its budgeted parameters.

Ms. Sprinkle stated that she would like to see how the next few months look with staffing levels. She indicated a preference to see the additional overtime funds removed in the budget amendment.

Mr. Cleworth noted that the Council would have another work session between now and the ordinance's second reading, which would allow more time to review specifics on any area of concern. With confirmation from CFO Bell, he pointed out that the requested increase of \$600,000 to overtime factored in salary savings.

Mayor Pruhs recommended that the Council advance the ordinance and work on drafting amendments between now and the next meeting, noting also that there will be a work session.

Mr. Marney concurred that the Council would benefit from looking at the issue as a team.

Mr. Ringstad expressed concern over the new safety compliance and abatement position being added to the Mayor's Office. He recognized that it was essentially the combination of two part-time roles but expressed hope that the City would not have a need for a permanent abatement specialist. **Mayor Pruhs** encouraged the Council to discuss the concept of the new position now rather than waiting for the next work session. **Mr. Ringstad** asked if the \$116,000 being requested would cover a partial or a full year. CFO Bell explained that with an anticipated start date of July 1, the 2024 total would be \$58,000, and the 2025 budget would be \$116,000 for the full year.

Mr. Marney shared that he and some other Councilmembers felt that it may be more appropriate for the position to be placed under the Attorney's Office. **Mayor Pruhs** replied that some components of the job would not belong under the Attorney's Office. He stated it would be beneficial to hear more about the plans for the position from Chief of Staff Mike Sanders.

M. Sanders explained that the position would be more like combining two full-time jobs. He stated that he understands the hesitation with adding a permanent position but recalled many instances where positions have been cut when it was prudent to do so. He shared that currently one employee is doing risk management, purchasing, and safety, each of which could be a full-time job. M. Sanders shared that the idea of an abatement specialist had been suggested by Ms. Sprinkle as someone who could help oversee the abatement process from start to finish. He discussed the various interactions the position would have with different departments and the relief it would bring to department heads in those select areas.

Human Resources Director Jake Merritt stated that because of the interaction the position would have with other departments for the safety piece, he believes that the Mayor's Office is the appropriate place for it. He discussed other aspects of the abatement process, such as research and communication. J. Merritt acknowledged that while the City's goals relating to abatement are to eventually have nothing left to do, there would likely be enough work to justify this position for many years to come. He noted that the season controls some aspects of abatement work as well, so different times of the year would change the focus of the position.

Ms. Sprinkle expressed her concern that because the components of the combined role vastly differ from each other, it would be disheartening to have someone end up neglecting some areas to focus on others due to certain aspects being less pleasant than others. **M. Sanders** explained that the person would report to him, and as such, he can help ensure their efforts are appropriately focused. **Mayor Pruhs** referenced the recent property cleanup work and confirmed that addressing blighted properties would be another part of the position's responsibility, as well as tagging vehicles that are encroaching the right-of-way. **Ms. Sprinkle** suggested that staff share the work diagram she drafted at the next work session.

Mr. Cleworth stated that he is not a fan of adding positions during the year, preferring to consider such requests during the budget process. He stated that it is a neat idea, but the timing may be off. **Ms. Sprinkle** stated she looks forward to sharing more of the thought process behind the issue.

Mr. Cleworth noted there is an FFD position being shifted to the Mayor's Office. He asked if the item had been reviewed by the City Attorney and if there were any issues with the union contract. **M. Sanders** clarified that the position is not considered an EMT, fire suppression, or fire prevention role, which are the job classifications covered by the union. He stated that the job's scope of work has a strong tie to social services which is why it fits well in the Mayor's Office. **Mayor Pruhs** added that Fire Chief Andrew Cocco was supportive of the change. **Mr. Cleworth** asked if it would be added to the IBEW contract. **M. Sanders** indicated that the Mayor would like it to be a non-union position.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADVANCE ORDINANCE NO. 6282 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Ringstad, Tidwell, Rogers, Sprinkle, Marney, Cleworth
NAYS: None
Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Ordinance No. 6282 ADVANCED.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TO THE CITY COUNCIL

- a) Fairbanks Diversity Council Meeting Minutes of April 9, 2024

ACCEPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. Ringstad indicated that he had no comments or report.

Mr. Marney reported that he was present for the property cleanup project and that he cannot believe that the neighbors tolerated it for so many years. He shared details about the illegal activities that regularly occurred at the location. He discussed attending the annual police memorial event in North Pole and the cleanup event at the Clay Street Cemetery the previous Saturday.

Ms. Tidwell expressed pride in the cleanup efforts across the city. She thanked Ms. Sprinkle for spearheading the issue and suggested that in five years, the City may not even need a paid staff position to focus on abatement work.

Mr. Cleworth thanked Mr. Marney for his volunteer efforts and complimented the street striping work that was recently performed by either the State or Public Works. He discussed a reported issue of some business owners having fire inspections that resulted in a letter informing them of a 30-day window to correct non-compliant sprinkler systems and the FECC receiving numerous phone calls about the matter. He asked if there was any additional information about that.

Chief Cocco shared that they have a new automated compliance system that is doing exactly what it was implemented to do. He explained that inspection data is entered into a database, the Fire Marshal reviews it for accuracy, and then the system generates any notices for non-compliance items that need correction. He stated that the default on such violations is 30 days, at which time another visit will occur to ensure compliance. He noted that variances result in an individual review to determine if an extension is warranted, such as when business owners are making a good-faith effort to rectify any issues. **Mr. Cleworth** discussed the challenges of sprinkler system maintenance and repair, noting the limited number of companies and options that business owners have for those types of services. He expressed hope that the City would give leeway with businesses, as the 30-day window may not be long enough to get an appointment. Chief Cocco acknowledged those challenges as well as the scary nature of receiving a Notice of Violation. He confirmed that granting an extension is evidence that the business owner is trying to start the correction process. He stated that if extenuating circumstances arise, he may contact the Council for guidance. He assured the Council that the Fire Marshal is not issuing citations or closing businesses after that 30-day window, especially given how far behind the office is in its annual mandatory inspections. **Mr. Cleworth** thanked Chief Cocco for the information.

Ms. Rogers gave positive notes about the FDC and Crisis Now, both of which the Council heard reports about earlier in the meeting. She shared that Reentry Coordinator Marsha Oss had been advocating for legislation, which ultimately did not get passed, that supported individuals having access to certain technology during incarceration. She stated that the Behavioral Health Community Council is seeking to rewrite many of its procedures governing how the coalition functions. She expressed gratitude for the discussion, work, and forward progress that occurred in the meeting.

Ms. Sprinkle reported that the Chena Riverfront Commission will not meet again for some time. She shared that she received a call from the consultant working on the Polaris project and stated that they were able to discuss wants and needs, as well as hopes and desires for the property and the City. She asked for an update on the demolition project. **Mayor Pruhs** indicated that as of the previous week, the contractors were finishing abatement work on the first floor and that they should have a crane in place within a week. **Ms. Sprinkle** expressed excitement at the progress.

Mayor Pruhs discussed his efforts to include Councilmembers in many things and to treat them as multipliers in the work they can all accomplish together. He complimented Councilmembers for their unity and continuity as they share information with each other. He stated that they are working on an ordinance regarding abatements and blighted properties. **Mayor Pruhs** indicated that he will meet with the Building Official in the coming week to determine what properties they

will be focusing on over the summer and stated that he would invite Ms. Sprinkle and Mr. Ringstad to join him. He reported that the City has received many positive comments on the work done at two properties in Island Homes, noting that one will have a \$70,000 lien placed on it while another is being put up for sale. He affirmed the City's commitment to continue making progress.

Mr. Cleworth asked whether any City property being put up for sale must come to the City Council first to determine the appropriate action. **Mayor Pruhs** confirmed that was correct.

CITY CLERK'S REPORT

Clerk Snider reviewed the changes to the Council's regular meeting schedule due to Memorial Day. She reminded the Council that its next meeting will be the work session on June 4.

CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Attorney Chard indicated that he had nothing to report.

ADJOURNMENT

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

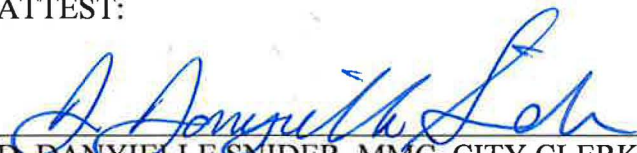
Mayor Pruhs called for objection and, hearing none, so ORDERED.

Mayor Pruhs declared the meeting adjourned at 8:44 p.m.



DAVID PRUHS, MAYOR

ATTEST:



D. DANIELLE SNIDER, MMC, CITY CLERK

Transcribed by: CC