



FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, JUNE 10, 2024
FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
800 CUSHMAN STREET, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

The City Council convened at 6:30 p.m. on the above date 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
Margarita Bell, Chief Financial Officer (remotely)
Nathan Werner, Police Captain
Andrew Coccaro, Fire Chief
Jeff Jacobson, Public Works Director
Jake Merritt, Human Resources Director
Brynn Butler, Housing Coordinator
Nicholas Clark, Fire Battalion Chief
Samuel Bratten, Fire Captain
Dalton Gregg, Fire Captain

INVOCATION

The invocation was given by City Clerk Danyielle Snider.

FLAG SALUTATION

At the request of Mayor Pruhs, Ms. Rogers led the flag salutation.

CEREMONIAL MATTERS (Proclamations, Introductions, Recognitions, Awards)

Fire Chief Andrew Coccaro recognized recent promotions within the Fairbanks Fire Department (FFD). A pinning ceremony was performed for the following staff:

- Nicholas Clark, promoted from Captain to Battalion Chief.
- Samuel Bratten, promoted from Driver to Captain.
- Dalton Gregg, promoted from Driver to Captain.

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 (FDC) – J. Webb reported on the recent Race Against Racism event that the FDC partnered to host. She shared information about the group's plan to participate in the upcoming Juneteenth event as well as a "Human Library" project. At the request of Ms. Rogers, J. Webb provided additional details about Human Library events.

Sherry Argend – S. Argend stated that she lives on Riverside Drive close to the Boatel Bar. She expressed frustration with the noise level from the bar due to live music, often until 2 or 3 a.m. She stated that tenants in the apartment building she owns have moved out because of the noise disturbance. S. Argend acknowledged that noise laws exist but stated that the Mayor exercises his authority to grant variances. She provided a history of issues with the Boatel Bar, noise and others, and shared ideas that could be enacted to mitigate the negative experience of residents in the area. She affirmed that she wants the Boatel Bar to be successful, just not in a way that makes living in the area miserable. She asked for a reasonable solution and for input from the police.

Ms. Rogers asked S. Argend if any concerned party had used a decibel monitoring device to determine the noise level. S. Argend stated that she had downloaded an application to do so but found that no one was interested in the data. **Ms. Rogers** shared options that some venues use to manage noise for performing arts and suggested that the item could be discussed at a work session.

Ms. Sprinkle asked for details about the noise ordinance. **Mayor Pruhs** provided such and indicated that the variance application he received was for Friday and Saturday only. He stated that if issues occur outside of an approved variance, he wants to know. He added that he has a meeting with the Boatel Bar owners in the coming week. He thanked S. Argend for the suggestion to notify nearby residents when a variance is granted and committed to update her within the week.

Victor Buberger – V. Buberger spoke against the GARS intersection, referencing a recent serious accident there. He asked if the City had any statistics on the intersection yet. He asked if the lights on the Old Steese Highway would be repaired before winter. He shared having personally witnessed many open container violations and asked if individuals were now allowed to drink in public downtown. He asked if any Councilmembers have met someone who likes the GARS intersection, calling it the worst thing the City had ever done, and noted the project cost of \$40MM.

Ms. Sprinkle asked V. Buberger if he recalled that the City did not create the GARS intersection. V. Buberger acknowledged that fact but suggested that the City would have some influence on the matter. **Mayor Pruhs** stated that he would request vehicle accident data from the Dispatch Center. He affirmed that drinking in public is not legal and that the City and State take violations seriously.

David van den Berg, Executive Director of the Downtown Association of Fairbanks – D. van den Berg shared information about the 43rd Annual Midnight Sun Festival taking place downtown on Saturday, June 22. He provided copies of the traffic control plan for the event and recognized the relationship his organization has with various departments in the City to hold the event. He acknowledged contributions from the City's Discretionary Fund grant program. He praised the

after-event clean-up work that occurs and noted how downtown looks unchanged by Monday morning. He stated that the DTA looks forward to seeing Resolution No. 5116 on the next agenda.

Ms. Rogers asked D. van den Berg if he had any suggestions regarding the noise concerns at the Boatel Bar. D. van den Berg stated that Alaska Universal Productions (AUP) may be able to measure decibels at an event.

Linda Hebert – L. Hebert stated that she also lives near the Boatel Bar and is upset about the noise during outdoor concerts. She acknowledged that the business likely follows the law by getting a variance, but the levels, especially the bass, are so loud that her walls and baseboards vibrate; she added that things have fallen off shelves in her home. She stated it is difficult to sleep and spoke about challenges that residents in the area face in their own homes because of the concerts. She discussed decibel level restrictions in Anchorage’s noise ordinance. She suggested that there should be limits to the duration and frequency of variances granted. She pointed out that it occurs virtually every weekend for four months straight every year, and she sometimes has to leave her property just to get peace and quiet.

Ms. Sprinkle asked L. Hebert how long the issue had been going on. L. Hebert stated that it has been about five years and that they have sought relief from three different mayors and the police.

Mayor Pruhs, hearing no requests for additional comments, declared Citizens’ Comments closed.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA

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

Mr. Cleworth pulled Resolution No. 5123, item 12(b) under New Business, from the consent agenda.

Ms. Sprinkle pulled item 13(c) under Written Communications to the City Council, “Reappointment to the Fairbanks Diversity Council,” 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.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

a) Regular Meeting Minutes of May 13, 2024

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

b) Regular Meeting Minutes of May 20, 2024

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

SPECIAL ORDERS

- a) The Fairbanks City Council held a public hearing and considered the following alcohol license applications for renewal:

Lic. #	DBA	License Type	Licensee	Address
703	Gavora’s Fine Wine	Package Store	Market Basket, Inc.	250 Third Street
1134	Thrifty Liquors	Package Store	Market Basket, Inc.	1410 Cushman Street
3467	Lin’s Asian Bistro	Restaurant or Eating Place	Lin’s Panda Garden, Inc.	1900 Airport Way

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

Mayor Pruhs called for Public Testimony.

Nick Gavora, Vice President of Market Basket, Inc. – N. Gavora shared details about his company’s 60-year history in the Fairbanks area. He stated that he wanted to introduce himself and be available for questions. He discussed the plans for Thrifty Liquors to be demolished as part of an upcoming State DOT project. He expressed the company’s desire to rebuild in that location, with a business model similar to their gas stations, and to maintain the alcohol license.

Ms. Rogers thanked N. Gavora for coming and praised his plan to help make that area of town a hub as it once was. She encouraged him to keep the Council informed of the company’s progress.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if the company had purchased the building adjacent to Thrifty Liquors. N. Gavora confirmed that they had purchased the former Drop In Lounge. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked if that location would be the footprint of their new space. N. Gavora stated that it would but that both buildings would be removed as part of the intersection project and to make way for the new convenience store. **Ms. Sprinkle** asked if there is an expected change in clientele. N. Gavora indicated that the goal is to move away from a solely age-restricted liquor store and have something similar to Ester Gas, the company’s newest business.

Mr. Ringstad referenced the long call-out list as part of the public safety report provided to the Council and asked for N. Gavora’s thoughts; he added his assumption that the list has more to do with the store’s general location and that the business is not directly related to many of the events. N. Gavora stated that he believes there are multiple factors. He shared that past reviews of details to the call-out reports have shown that many individuals use the business as a location identifier because of its proximity to a major intersection. He asserted that the number of calls directly related to his business, such as calls made by his employees, would be a fraction of the overall list, making it comparable to their other locations. **Mr. Ringstad** asked that the Council be kept in the loop as things progress. N. Gavora committed to doing so and discussed the status of plan development.

Ms. Rogers recounted the past success of the Drop In Lounge as a community asset and gathering place for many people and families. She recalled that their donuts were the best in town and encouraged N. Gavora to keep that history in mind as they proceed. N. Gavora stated that all the company’s gas stations have a daily donut delivery from the Donut Shop, which is a staple for their business. He added that their ice cream service is also very popular.

Mr. Marney thanked N. Gavora for being present and asked if he has a plan for business hours at the new store. N. Gavora stated that their other locations are open from 5 a.m. to midnight, seven days a week. He noted that none of those are in areas that stay as busy as the Cushman/Airport intersection late into the night, indicating that they may consider expanded hours at that location.

Mayor Pruhs discussed the loss of buildings near that intersection and asked for the Council's patience with DOT and the upcoming project. He spoke favorably of the planned enhancements, particularly the creation of a top-shelf convenience store.

Mr. Ringstad spoke about the growing concern over vacant buildings and how reinvestment into the community was greatly appreciated.

Ms. Sprinkle shared that she is on the Public Enhancement Committee for the Cushman/Airport intersection project. She stated that an attractive "Welcome to Fairbanks" installation is planned for the northwest corner of the intersection, which she hopes will further improve the area.

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

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

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

NAYS: None

Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

MAYOR'S COMMENTS AND REPORT

Mayor Pruhs stated that, given some of the public comments from the evening, he will be reviewing parameters of the existing noise ordinance and researching options for decibel monitoring. He shared that, unfortunately, changes to the GARS intersection are out of his control.

COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. Ringstad stated that his noise concerns are tied to the loud bass from vehicles near his home.

Mr. Marney expressed gratitude for the presence of FFD personnel at the meeting. He acknowledged that the Council has tough discussions ahead with the City budget. He expressed hope that current negotiations are equitable and congratulated the recently promoted staff.

Ms. Tidwell echoed congratulations for the promoted personnel and expressed appreciation for FFD's role in the community. She stated she was happy to hear from those in the neighborhood of the Boatel Bar and commented that she hears the music from her own home, which is across Airport Way and much further from the bar. She acknowledged enjoying attending the bar's events herself and expressed support in finding appropriate solutions for everyone involved.

Ms. Sprinkle thanked the Mayor for the work done on abatements and nuisance properties. She called it an economic driver and safety issue, expressing excitement for the work to continue.

Ms. Rogers thanked the Mayor for committing to looking into the noise issue and decibel readings. She asserted that there are many options available to remedy the issue. She congratulated the members of FFD on their recent promotions.

Mr. Cleworth agreed that it is great to see people moving up within the ranks in the City. He addressed the noise concerns and shared that he lives a block away from the Boatel Bar. He acknowledged the challenge of the situation, noting that the area was annexed into the city many years ago. He pointed out that none of the commenters requested an end to the Boatel Bar's music events, rather they expressed that it is untenable beyond a certain hour. He deferred to the Mayor to speak with the owners and discuss options. He concurred that residents should be able to sleep.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a) Ordinance No. 6282 – An Ordinance Amending the 2024 Operating and Capital Budgets for the Second Time. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING.

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

Mayor Pruhs called for Public Testimony.

Zach Rittel – Z. Rittel stated that he had been with the FFD for 12 years. He shared that in his experience, the only real solution to reduce overtime at the FFD is to add more staff. He indicated that the current practice of using overtime to cover daily minimum positions is incredibly inefficient. He stated that the \$600,000 proposal for additional overtime would be better spent to hire six more firefighters, which he asserted would cause overtime savings to be significant by the end of the year. He indicated that the current daily shift-staffing level needs to stay in place given the type and volume of calls the FFD receives.

Nicholas Clark – N. Clark thanked the Council for the pinning ceremony he and other FFD members participated in earlier in the meeting. He shared some history on staffing at the FFD over the last several years. He stated that there used to be a minimum staffing of nine, with actual shift-staffing way above that. He explained that the additional scheduled personnel could cover anyone missing due to leave, injuries, or other reasons, while maintaining the minimum threshold. N. Clark recounted how the minimum staffing level was increased to 13 in 2023, through a Letter of Agreement between the City and the Union, in order to get the third ambulance up and running. He pointed out that former Fire Chief Scott Raygor and now Chief Cocco have had the same message, that this is the minimum needed for the daily operations of the department. He discussed how busy the FFD is daily and stated that the conversation should shift towards long-term solutions and the root of the problem. He expressed the need to increase overall staffing, as the 14 scheduled employees per day barely covers the 13-person minimum. He stated the FFD is not able to absorb absences as it did when the minimum was nine. He declared that the community cannot afford a lesser level of service, so lowering minimum staffing levels would not be prudent. He stated that the issue is not about the staff nor the union, but rather the services needed and provided. He indicated that, contrary to some opinions, FFD personnel are not there to earn significant overtime; rather, they want to work hard and enjoy an appropriate amount of time off.

Mr. Marney thanked N. Clark for speaking. He discussed payroll summary reports that show upper-command positions receiving the majority of the share of overtime, while staff with less time at the department received less. He stated that it seems opposite of conventional wisdom and asked for the reasons why. N. Clark indicated that it is a product of poor retention. He affirmed that the upper-level positions do not want to be there as many hours as they are. He explained how the growing gap of experience is a result of retention issues that have occurred over several years. He noted that his own advancement to Battalion Chief after only 12 years is considered very early for such a promotion. N. Clark stated that they have to fix the issues of recruitment, hiring, and retention because the average new employee is leaving after two years, eventually resulting in there being no one to promote. **Mr. Marney** recalled that under former Chief Raygor, the Council had been told that turnover was no longer a serious issue. He stated that now the Council is being told that turnover is a problem, due to employees desiring a better work-life balance. N. Clark clarified that he believes the Council was told that recruitment was seeing more success during that time; however, retention has been an issue for many years, including under Chief Raygor.

Ms. Sprinkle asked how long the average new recruit stays at FFD. N. Clark indicated that about two years is the average, with departures attributed to a number of reasons. He stated that the feeling of being overworked is an understatement for the entire department.

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

Mayor Pruhs noted that there is an amended, proposed substitute version of Ordinance No. 6282.

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6282 by substituting the amended, proposed version.

Mayor Pruhs called for objection to the motion to AMEND Ordinance No. 6282 by substituting the amended, proposed version and, seeing none, declared the MOTION CARRIED.

Mr. Ringstad asked CFO Margarita Bell to explain the changes between the original ordinance and the proposed substitute. CFO Bell reported that the only difference was an additional \$250,000 expenditure proposed from the Capital Fund for the City Hall Childcare Center project.

Ms. Sprinkle discussed the new Abatement, Code Compliance, and Safety Specialist position. She asked if there had been further review to confirm the balance and priority between the various aspects of the role. **Mayor Pruhs** shared that he met with staff and confirmed that the abatement component of the job would be the primary responsibility. He stated that additional work would be added in time, especially with an upcoming ordinance pertaining to blighted properties.

Mr. Marney, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6282, as Amended, by reducing the increase in overtime for the Fire Department from \$600,000 to \$200,000.

Mr. Marney discussed the affordability of overtime, both in the present and in the future. He recalled being told that there was still time before the budgeted amount would be exhausted at the FFD. CFO Bell explained that after the most recent pay period, the department is over its targeted

amount for overtime for this point in the year. She stated that there are still salary savings due to vacancies, which offsets some overages, but a budget amendment will be necessary at the current pace. She stated that if position vacancies continue, \$600,000 would be needed to get through the end of 2024. **Mr. Marney** noted that the Council can always make an amendment in the future.

Ms. Sprinkle asked for confirmation that if they hired more staff in the coming months, the salary savings would go away. CFO Bell confirmed that is correct and clarified that overtime expenses would also go down with the additional staff.

Mr. Ringstad spoke in favor of the amendment. He discussed vacancies, recruitment, and retention and asserted that the Council needs to have a more focused conversation on fixing those problems rather than just throwing a bandage on the overtime issue. He stated that he would like more information on the substantial workload being reported. He referenced the recently added Community Paramedic position that would hopefully alleviate some of the pressure and suggested that the Council consider adding another position if it is successful. He reported that the Finance Committee was having concerns about being able to sustain overtime expenses in future years.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if the budget amendment increase of \$35,000 in advertising for the Fairbanks Police Department (FPD) had any overlap to advertising for the FFD. Chief of Staff Sanders indicated that it could but reminded the Council that the suppression side of FFD, where the overtime is occurring, is fully staffed on paper. He explained that they are not having a problem with getting people to apply at the FFD; rather, the issue is that they have a minimum staffing level of 13 with only 14 scheduled daily to fill those spots. He added that the various, legitimate reasons why employees go on leave are greater than the available buffer in scheduling without overtime.

Ms. Tidwell stated that she does not understand how the department can staff itself to the required capacity without the extra \$600,000 the Council is being told is necessary. She added that she would like to discuss the Community Paramedic position moving to the Mayor's Office.

Mr. Marney expressed hope that the current contract negotiations will solve the issue of overtime at the FFD but acknowledged that significant changes would not take effect until 2025. He stated that the Council needs to have a serious conversation about the service level.

Mr. Cleworth noted that the original 2024 FFD budget included \$900,000 in overtime. He asked if there was an estimate for the total expected overtime for the entire year. CFO Bell stated that as of May 31, the department was over budget by \$139,000 for all payroll and benefits, or \$112,000 if considering only salaries and wages. She discussed monthly targets and projections for end-of-year totals. She added that by moving the Community Paramedic position to the Mayor's Office it would mean some loss in salary savings, which factored into the estimated \$600,000 increase.

Mr. Ringstad asked for additional clarification. CFO Bell reviewed the amounts and reiterated that by May 31, the FFD was over budget for 2024 by an estimated \$140,000.

Mr. Cleworth reminded the Council that the original draft 2024 budget included the FFD's request for \$1MM in overtime funding, which was adjusted to \$900,000 in the Mayor's recommended budget. He recalled that the Council was told clearly that the number would be fiction and there would have to be future discussion about overtime at some point in the year. He noted that the

Letter of Agreement that increased the minimum staffing level to 13 had a sunset date of December 31, 2023. He pointed out that the deadline was changed by a resolution that followed, which created a multi-year obligation for the increased staffing level without a designated funding source. **Mr. Cleworth** stated that actions like that trigger multiple sections of the Fairbanks General Code (FGC), and that any resolution or ordinance with a financial impact is required to have a fiscal note; he added that the resolution did not. He attested that the Council never saw a number tied to the changes and spoke in defense of the Council on the matter. He pointed out that the mill levy for the year was recently passed, which resulted in an additional \$500,000 in revenue that can be used in the current budget. He discussed how one-time revenue items cannot be counted on for long-term, fixed expenses. **Mr. Cleworth** noted that the additional funds, if used entirely for FFD overtime, would still not cover the \$600,000 request. He recalled that the Council had discussed for quite some time its concerns about the overtime issue and that no dollar amount the Council approves will fix the problem. He contrasted the situation with the FPD, which has an overtime budget of \$300,000 in 2024. He explained that years ago an unwritten minimum staffing level was in place at FPD, but it was done away with through internal policy changes. He indicated that no other labor contract with the City includes minimum staffing levels and that such constraints take away management rights from the department. He stated that the Fire Chief and Chief of Staff have their hands tied and that the Council got itself into a mess. He expressed willingness to vote for the amendment but acknowledged that the Council will soon be back in the same situation.

Mr. Ringstad shared that the Finance Committee confirmed that the City is on an unsustainable path with some of the current staffing practices. He indicated that the City is fortunately in good shape for the next year or two, while other municipalities across the state are struggling to pay bills but added that the City's time of reckoning is coming. He agreed that a discussion about the services citizens want, are willing to pay for, and are willing to give up would be prudent.

Ms. Tidwell reiterated that the Council has had the same discussion over and over. She noted that Councilmembers have heard from many involved in the situation and that the same points remain. She stated that they are not giving the FFD the ability to do the job being asked of them. She pointed out that the Council has also reviewed the services it wants to provide for the community, citing past years when emergency calls were stacked and citizens waited longer for a response. She recounted the increase to minimum staffing levels and adding another ambulance in order to better meet service needs. She stated that it does not make any sense to now not provide the necessary funds to do what is required and that the only way the City can continue to provide the level of service the Council has set and reduce overtime is to hire more people.

Ms. Sprinkle agreed that the Council wants to do the right thing for the City and that FFD personnel are being worked to pieces. She indicated that she wants to make sure the City can afford it. She acknowledged that adding positions saves in overtime but costs money, while not adding positions creates overtime and also costs money. She concurred that it will be a conversation about how much Fairbanksans want to pay for services. She expressed distaste that the bigger issue is being discussed as part of a budget amendment rather than on its own.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 6282, AS AMENDED, BY REDUCING THE INCREASE IN OVERTIME FOR THE FIRE DEPARTMENT FROM \$600,000 TO \$200,000 AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Ringstad, Cleworth, Marney, Pruhs
NAYS: Rogers, Sprinkle, Tidwell
Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED.

Ms. Tidwell asked for more explanation about the Community Paramedic position being moved from the FFD to the Mayor's Office. **Mayor Pruhs** explained that the position should have been in place by now but for whatever reason, it was not. He shared that he instructed the HR Director to draft a job description so they could move forward in hiring for the position. He clarified that it is not an emergency management services position and that the delay is hurting the community. He explained that the person would work under the Mayor but in conjunction with the Fire Chief and the hospital. He stated that while the position would have a vehicle to respond to calls, it would not be an ambulance. **Ms. Tidwell** asked for a legal opinion on the change. City Attorney Chard confirmed that the intent of the new position is to work as part of the City's social services programs versus that of emergency response. He stated that because of that, the position falls outside of the current collective bargaining agreement (CBA) with the Fairbanks Firefighters Union (FFU) and that the Mayor has the authority to take the action being proposed.

Mr. Cleworth moved to AMEND Ordinance No. 6282, as Amended, by removing the newly created Abatement, Code Compliance, and Safety Specialist position. The motion died due to lack of a second.

Ms. Rogers asked if the Community Paramedic was intended as a long-term plan. **Mayor Pruhs** explained that the position is funded by the Council and while he hopes it would extend beyond the current year, it would be up to the Council to fund it in the future. He shared that the Fire Chief acknowledged that if the position works as envisioned, it would be worthy of expansion as it would reduce the call volume for emergency management services. He added that once in place, there would be checks and balances for the Council to determine if the position warrants continued funding. **Ms. Rogers** asked if the individual would be working with City staff who currently handle housing, homelessness, reentry, and crisis response programs. **Mayor Pruhs** replied affirmatively.

Mr. Cleworth expressed his opinion that the time to add new positions is during the budgeting cycle – not in the middle of the year. He stated that each time the Council does this, they add more “mouths to feed” at the City and make the Council's job more difficult. He noted that FFD's budget has increased by 30% over the last 24 months, which was only possible because other funding sources became available. He reminded fellow members that those funding sources may not exist in the future. He cautioned the Council to take a conservative approach until the end of 2024. He referenced the adjustments to the Capital Fund budget and asked if the increase to the FFD line for platform upgrades was for the equipment that had been sent to Pennsylvania for repair. Chief of Staff Sanders confirmed that the line item is just a reappropriation of funds from 2023, carried forward, and he confirmed that the equipment had already been sent out.

Mr. Ringstad asked for additional clarification on the logistics of funding the platform repairs. M. Sanders explained that it is a lengthy process to get platforms serviced and, while funds were appropriated in 2023, the City was not able to get the equipment out and the money spent in time.

Ms. Sprinkle asked for details about the increase of \$30,000 in fire grant matches. CFO Bell explained that the City had applied for two grants that would require matching funds, and this

would allow the department to spend those funds, as needed. She pointed out that the Capital Fund budget notes the funds as committed so they cannot be used for other purposes.

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

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

NEW BUSINESS

- a) Resolution No. 5122 – A Resolution Establishing the Rate of Levy of 2024 Real Property Taxes for the City of Fairbanks, Alaska. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

ADOPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA.

- b) Resolution No. 5123 – A Resolution to Amend the City Schedule of Fees and Charges for Services by Adjusting Garbage Collection Rates. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to ADOPT Resolution No. 5123.

Mayor Pruhs invited Public Works Director Jeff Jacobson to address the Council. J. Jacobson reported that the adoption of Ordinance No. 6282, as Amended, transferred \$30,000 from the General Funds to the operations budget for garbage collection. He explained that the transfer was due to actual expenses exceeding the fees collected for service. He noted that this is the second fiscal year where general funds have subsidized garbage collection expenses, which indicates that the current fee is too low. He pointed out that the resolution offers two rate increase options:

- A quarterly increase of \$3, or \$1 a month, which would be a wash and cover the costs.
- A quarterly increase of \$12.50, or about \$4.17 a month, which would create a surplus to allow them to transfer \$30,000 back to the General Fund in a future amendment.

J. Jacobson expressed pride in the level of service the City provides for garbage collection, noting that residents pay one fee without limitation on the amount of garbage they can put out. He noted that this is unlike any other community in the state as there is typically a charge based on usage. He stated that residents get excellent service which he would not advocate reducing. He spoke in favor of increasing the quarterly fee by more than \$3 to account for the increases in tipping fees at the Borough landfill, which the City cannot control.

Ms. Sprinkle expressed frustration in the Borough's increased tipping fees. **Mayor Pruhs** confirmed that he will speak to Borough Mayor Bryce Ward about the issue. **Ms. Sprinkle** shared that she lives downtown, generates one bag of garbage a week, and is proud to recycle. She recalled that the Council chose to not increase fees in 2023, resulting in the City eating the difference, which may now happen again.

Mayor Pruhs invited the City Attorney to speak on the issue. Attorney Chard confirmed the information that J. Jacobson shared but advised the Council not to consider the higher fee increase in the second option. He explained that FGC Section 66-22 is very specific about what can be considered when increasing collection fees. He indicated that if the Council would like to raise the fee above what the Code allows, there should be an ordinance to amend the Code.

Mr. Ringstad asked for additional clarification on the fiscal notes. J. Jacobson reviewed various aspects of the current associated costs of operation and the impact of the proposed increases. He noted that the Code limits fee increases by tying them to the CPI, which is based out of Anchorage, while the primary challenge in rising costs is the increase to the Borough tipping fees, which take effect July 1, 2024. Attorney Chard clarified that the Code allows for increases due to both the CPI and increased tipping fees but not for reimbursing the General Fund for past subsidizations.

Ms. Sprinkle asked if it was the Borough Assembly that approved the tipping fee increase. **Mayor Pruhs** confirmed that the Assembly did so in its budget. J. Jacobson explained that the EPA requires the Borough to have on hand the total funds needed to close a cell at the landfill at a moment's notice and that skyrocketing costs had forced the Borough to increase its fees to meet the EPA requirements. **Ms. Sprinkle** discussed recent disagreements with the Borough about whether or not the City could dump certain materials from the Cowles Street project at the landfill. She recalled that the EPA had indicated it was acceptable while the Borough refused to accept it.

Mr. Cleworth asked CFO Bell what numbers she had used when drafting the budget. CFO Bell indicated that for expenses she had used the total of all costs relating to garbage collection including labor, tipping fees, equipment, supplies, postage, the Finance Department staff associated with this service, etc. She affirmed that encompassed the total cost of operating garbage services in the City. She stated that for revenue, she used the higher rate of \$105.50, which would have reflected the increased rate tied to total cost of operation. She explained that two fiscal notes were presented so the Council could see the impact of an increase as allowed by Code versus the increase based on past budget discussions of the Council.

Mr. Marney asked if the senior population is being subsidized because of their discounted rate. J. Jacobson clarified that all garbage customers are being subsidized. He shared details about the cost of other waste management expenses, such as clearing homeless camps and derelict properties, and stated those costs are not recouped through any collection fees or charge to the property owner. **Mr. Marney** asked if the City breaks even with the existing fees. J. Jacobson stated that for the last two years, it has not.

Ms. Sprinkle asked when the City would charge a property owner for the type of clean-up work J. Jacobson described. Attorney Chard explained that whenever there is an improvement by the City to private property, the Council decides whether to place a lien on the property or make it a personal obligation to the owner. He added that any improvement that could be argued as benefiting the overall community, not just the owner, can be taken into consideration as the Council exercises its discretion with recovering the expense of the work performed.

Mr. Ringstad summarized the issue of the gap between budgeted revenue, current fees, and actual expenses. He acknowledged that the Council has procedural considerations and asked for input on an appropriate sequence and timeline. Attorney Chard recommended that if the Council was in

favor of the resolution, it should pass it with the first fiscal note attached. Then, if the Mayor and/or any Councilmember wanted to draft an ordinance to change the FGC language, they could do so.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. 5123 (WITH THE LESSER FISCAL NOTE) AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Marney, Sprinkle, Rogers, Cleworth, Tidwell, Ringstad
NAYS: None
Mayor Pruhs declared the MOTION CARRIED and Resolution No. 5123 ADOPTED.

- c) Resolution No. 5124 – A Resolution to Amend the City Schedule of Fees and Charges for Services by Adding Credit Card and Other Processing Fees for Non-Utility Billing. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs.

ADOPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA.

- d) Resolution No. 5125 – A Resolution in Recognition of Samson Hardware Being the Oldest Continuous Business Operation in Fairbanks, Alaska. Introduced by Mayor Pruhs and Council Member Ringstad.

ADOPTED on the CONSENT AGENDA.

[Clerk Note: The title of Resolution No. 5125 was corrected to read, "A Resolution in Recognition of Samson Hardware Being One of the Oldest Continuous Business Operations in Fairbanks, Alaska.]

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS TO THE CITY COUNCIL

- a) Proposed Amendment to 2024 City Council Regular Meeting Schedule

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- b) Reappointment to the Board of Plumber Examiners

APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA

- c) Reappointment to the Fairbanks Diversity Council

Ms. Rogers, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to APPROVE the reappointment to the Fairbanks Diversity Council.

Ms. Sprinkle pointed out a discrepancy in the memorandum's identification of which committee the reappointment was associated with. Clerk Snider acknowledged that this was a staff error and stated that the document would be corrected.

Mayor Pruhs called for objection on the motion to APPROVE the reappointment to the Fairbanks Diversity Council, with the correction as noted by the City Clerk, and hearing none, so ORDERED.

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND COUNCILMEMBERS' COMMENTS

Ms. Tidwell shared that she had no reports but has an upcoming meeting with the Fairbanks Economic Development Corporation board. She added that she will be attending the first meeting of the Borough's Economic Development Committee in July.

Mr. Marney stated that he had no committee reports. He requested the Council excuse his absence for the upcoming work session as he will be visiting family out of state.

Mr. Ringstad and **Ms. Sprinkle** each indicated they had no reports or comments.

Ms. Rogers stated that she had no report but has several upcoming meetings scheduled.

Mr. Cleworth indicated that he had several items to address:

- He reported that on 2nd Avenue, next to Bobby's Downtown, sections of the street have been designated for bus parking only. He shared that the signs are placed higher than usual and are not visible from a typical vehicle window. He asked if the City Engineer could take a look and ensure that the placement meets established regulations.
- He spoke of the expectations in place when the City gave up utility powers to form Interior Gas Utility (IGU) years ago. He noted that the Council was to receive a quarterly report, which has not consistently happened. He suggested the City dig out the list of caveats of that transfer to determine if requirements are being met. He added that one additional stipulation was that the salary of IGU Board members could not exceed that of Borough Assemblymembers. He stated that he is hopeful that the stipulation has been followed but felt that the ordinance should be reviewed regardless to confirm compliance.
- He shared that he met with the City Attorney and had started drafting a list of questions regarding the Borough tax assessment for economic development. He stated that they hope to have a chronological list of events on the topic prior to the next Council meeting, though he was unsure if they would receive a response from the Borough in time.
- He complimented the road patching work done by the Public Works department and stated that their volume and speed has been phenomenal thus far in 2024.
- He requested a report on the call volume at the FFD for the last 10 years.
- He stated he was informed that former Councilmember Donna Gilbert recently passed away and shared details about how she also served on the Borough Assembly at one time. He stated that she was a fascinating lady and shared the story of first meeting her during a heated Council meeting in the 1980's. He referred to D. Gilbert as someone with a heart of gold and shared another story about her housing an unhoused, injured citizen after they were released from the hospital with nowhere else to go.

CITY CLERK'S REPORT

Clerk Snider indicated that she had no items to report.

CITY ATTORNEY’S REPORT

Attorney Chard reported that the Court of Appeals issued an opinion the previous week in the case of *Anthony Jenkins-Alexie v. State of Alaska*. He explained that A. Jenkins-Alexie was the individual who shot Sergeant Allen Brandt in 2016. He stated that A. Jenkins-Alexie raised three procedural challenges, all of which the Court of Appeals ruled against.

EXECUTIVE SESSIONS

Mr. Cleworth, seconded by **Ms. Sprinkle**, moved to ENTER into Executive Sessions to discuss IAFF/FFU Labor Negotiations and receive a Litigation Update.

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

Mayor Pruhs called for a brief recess. The Council reconvened in Executive Session following the brief recess.

- a) IAFF/FFU Labor Negotiations – Guidance from Council (*entered at 8:45 p.m.*)
- b) Litigation Update (*entered at 9:47 p.m.*)

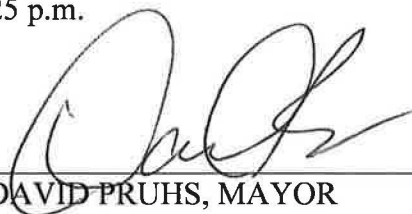
Mr. Cleworth brought the City Council out of the Executive Sessions, noting that the City Council met in Executive Sessions to discuss FFU labor negotiations and to receive an update about ongoing litigation with the City. He affirmed that no action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Tidwell moved to ADJOURN the meeting.


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

Mayor Pruhs declared the meeting adjourned at 10:25 p.m.



DAVID PRUHS, MAYOR

ATTEST:



D. DANYIELLE SNIDER, MMC, CITY CLERK

Transcribed by: CC