



**Committee of the Whole – 6:30 P.M.  
Regular City Council Meeting – 7:00 P.M.**

A regular meeting of the North Pole City Council was held on Monday, September 18, 2023, in the North Pole City Hall Chambers.

**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

Mayor Welch called the regular City Council meeting of Monday, September 18, 2023, to order at 7:00 p.m.

**Present:**

Mayor Welch  
DeJohn Cromer – Deputy Mayor Pro Tem  
Anton Keller -Alt. Deputy Mayor Pro Tem  
David Skippis  
Chandra Clack  
Aino Welch

**Absent/Excused:**

Jeffrey Jacobson – Mayor Pro Tem

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE U.S. FLAG**

Led by Melissa Dionne

**INVOCATION**

Given by Mr. Skippis

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Ms. Welch *moved* to approve the agenda of September 18, 2023

Seconded *by* Ms. Clack

**On the Agenda**

**DISCUSSION**

None

**PASSED**

Yes: 6 – A. Welch, Clack, Cromer, Keller, Skippis, Mayor Wech

No: 0

Absent: 1 - Jacobson

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Ms. Welch *moved* to approve the minutes from the 9/5/2023 meeting.

Seconded *by* Mr. Skippis

## On the Minutes

### DISCUSSION

None

### PASSED

Yes: 6 – A. Welch, Clack, Cromer, Keller, Skipps, Mayor Wech

No: 0

Absent: 1 – Jacobson

## COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR

- Mayor Welch read the Student of the Month Proclamation to Danika Dawley.
- Mayor Welch shared that on September 2<sup>nd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> he was at KJNP on 'The Coffee Cup'.
- On September 13<sup>th</sup> he was with the FAST policy board meeting, he said they had a lot to talk about and the meeting ran 4 hours long. One of the things that they had collaborated on was to work with the Mat Su Valley and their start up a Metropolitan Planning Organization. May Su has never had one and they are asking for assistance with it. That would mean that there is a continuous run of highway improvements from Fairbanks all the way down to Girdwood. They also had an executive session to talk about staff annual evaluations. From those discussions the COLA came out to 5%, the Merit pay to 1.5% for 2024. If anyone would like to know more, they can go to the FAST website and read the minutes.
- Today he was with Brent Sheets talking about the combined heat and power project with the IGU. They were talking about natural gas rates to run the generators. If they were to buy it today with possible interruptions in the flow it would cost \$32.80 per mmbtu. With no interruptions it is \$22.08. After they finish discussions with the IGU the next step will be getting a power use agreement from GVEA.
- Tomorrow he will be meeting with Alliance Accounting. They are telling us that they will not be able to provide us with auditing services next year.
- On September 22 at 6:00pm he will be attending the Air Force Ball.
- He thought that he was going to be going to Washington to meet with Dr. Chaudhry, Assistant Secretary to the Air Force, but they are coming here instead in October on their tour of the Pacific Air Forces.

## COUNCIL MEMBER QUESTIONS OF THE MAYOR

- None

## CITIZENS COMMENTS – (Limited to Five (5) minutes per Citizen)

- Mr. Benjamin Williams was with us tonight to talk about why he is running for Council in October and to give everyone a little more detail about him.

## COMMUNICATIONS FROM DEPARTMENT HEADS, BOROUGH REPRESENTATIVE AND THE CITY CLERK

### Police Department, Chief Dutra

- Chief Dutra was not with us tonight.

### Fire Department, AC Chambers

- AC Chambers reported that the new command truck has been received from Auto Trim where it was being upfitted and it has been placed into service. That means that the F150 that was being utilized can be used for the battalion vehicle instead of the 1 ton that is typically used for use with the trailer. That truck is rough and not one that they want to be using so often.
- Last week they had a few school classes come visit the station, they had about 90 students and they wanted to talk about PFAS. AC Chambers said they went over the history of PFAS and all of the things associated with it and with the fire service in general, where it came from and what it is used for. He said it was a good time. And they were happy to have them.
- They added 5 new volunteers last week, which puts them back at full staff for all positions volunteer, part time and career. They have 2 career hires that are working through their advanced EMT training that they must complete within their first year and they are knocking it out of the park. They also have 2 volunteers that are in the basic EMT class. One of them is a remarkable young lady named Nita Kozey that came to them as a junior fire fighter and now that she is 18 has expressed a desire to be one of the resident fire fighters, she is doing great things and has a great service minded attitude and they are happy to have her be with us.
- This week there is an are wide trench rescue training they have the trailer full of recue gear and will be participating in that as much as they can as they are kind of hurting on staff with hunting season.
- In October there is a fire officer class that all of the departments in the area pitched in to sponsor together and to share the instruction needs. They have 3 members that will be attending that. He said that professional development is on the rise and they are happy to have that. Some of the officers, including himself, will be helping as instructors in that training.
- This Friday they have a meeting with the City of Fairbanks Crisis Now coordinator Brend McFarlane to discuss their program and the mobile crisis team resources that are available in our area. This is a new program that he has been involved in since it's inception back when he was with the City of Fairbanks so he is very familiar with the program and he is excited to see where it has gone. This program is important to him because they have a number of calls in our service area who are 'regular users' or 'high volume' users and this people need help but it is not an advanced life support ambulance that they need, they need different help, they need assistance form case workers or something that is going to solve their problem. It is both on the mental health side and in our aging population and this is an issue that we are going to have to address and this is a good first step.
- AC Chambers said that he was recently contacted by Alaska Medicaid regarding the SEMT application we recently turned in and they will be doing a virtual site visit on Friday.

#### Finance, Tricia Fogarty

- Ms. Fogarty let everyone know that she gave everyone an interest statement from the AML account tonight.
- She said that looking at the year to date we are looking good on our revenues. That it looks like we will need to adjust a few things because we are receiving more than we budgeted for.
- Michelle Peede is working on the bank reconciliation and as soon as she has that done Ms. Fogarty will send out financials.

The Mayor asked if there are any anomalies that are standing out that might give her the impression that we will not make our budget this year. Perhaps with the tobacco tax.

- Ms. Fogarty said that it looks like the tobacco tax might come in a little bit lower than what was anticipated. She also said that we did just receive money for the property taxes that were collected in August, we received \$555,000.

Director of City Services, Danny Wallace

Special Topics

Ballot Proposal Flyer

- The flyer describing ballot initiatives 1 and 2 went out to all voting households in City limits on Friday. You should begin seeing it in your mailboxes this or next week. The cost was a little over \$800. These explain both propositions:
  - PROPOSITION 1: Authorizes North Pole to Apply for and accept a \$1.5 Million Forgivable Loan to Mitigate Emerging Contaminates (to include PFAS)
  - PROPOSITION 2: Authorizes the City of North Pole to Accept a \$653,000 Loan to design New Water Mains to Address Potential Water System Failure

Strategic Plan for Infrastructure

- We are meeting twice per month working on a Strategic Plan for Infrastructure to lay out the City's needs for both PW and Utilities. We'll have our second meeting this week and will work on a timeline of projects and funding strategies for each. This effort will support budget planning and the budget discussions with the city slated for next month.

Combined Heat and Power

- The CHP continues to move forward. As you know, the project requires financing and commitments from IGU (gas supply) and GVEA (power purchase agreements). During the past couple of weeks and today, the city held meetings with IGU and GVEA on MOUs for gas supply and power purchase. We are also working on funding options with Harrison Street and will meet with them in the next few days to review what they can bring to the table.

Building Department

- We're continuing to work with Three Bears on utilities permitting requirements as well as FNSB on the Wescott Pool upgrades. Both projects are moving forward as planned.

Public Works Department

- Summer paving should conclude in the next couple of weeks – you'll see this in selected spots throughout the city.
- We received three bids for snow removal, and you'll see those in your packets. We're recommending that Phil Hubbard be approved as the contractor for snow removal next year. His bid was competitive and scored the highest in the quality evaluation comparison. Of note, this contract can be renewed for one year for a total of three years (if the City and Hubbard agree). Additionally, the Council approves the renewal each year. Approving this request and the contract puts us on track for the start date of Oct 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Work on the Candy Cane light poles continue, and they are currently in Graham Construction's shop being prepped and painted. The current completion date is slated to be in 2-3 weeks. They do plan to do batches of poles (about 5 per time) and to install as they get finished.
- PW continues to focus on brush cutting and tree removal to prep for winter along with office renovations for the new Deputy Clerk / HR office.

Utility Department

- On September 26-28, the State of Alaska will be hosting the EPA-Western States Area Wide Optimization Program (AWOP) workshop in Fairbanks. This is an event that occurs at least once per year and rotates among states, and this will be the first time for Alaska in many years. On the 27th, they will start with a tour of the Water Treatment Plant (WTP) and hopefully the Moose Creek pump station. They will use that location as a practical exercise for gathering water quality data and will provide a report to North Pole Utilities.
- Utilities also has a visit from NP High School Chemistry class and Ms. Rebecca Missler for three sessions on Wed and Thursday. They'll have about 30 students for each visit and Paul Trissel will provide a brief tour of the facility.
- Nothing else significant to report from the water and sewer utilities departments, although the upcoming ballot propositions are important for our future ability to provide clean water.

The Mayor asked Mr. Wallace if he had gotten an invite regarding an online Infrastructure event on October 4<sup>th</sup> at the University of Washington. The Mayor said that he would forward the email.

- Mr. Wallace said that he had not received that but did say that he will be in Anchorage next week for an infrastructure conference.

#### Borough Representative

- Ms. Welch attended the FNSB meeting on 9/14/2023.
- Topics for this meeting were a new marijuana business that she did a 'no contest' on, a new liquor license for College Town Pizzeria, and a transfer of a liquor license from Gold Hill to Three Bears.
- There was also an Ordinance that pertains to aggressive animals on the agenda. Previously the ordinance in effect said that an animal that bit was considered a dangerous animal, there was no graduation. The new Ordinance added a new category called a nuisance animal, as well as it takes into consideration a wounded animal that bites someone trying to help it. The new wording is 'accidental' bite. They are also giving animal owners an avenue to have the designation of 'dangerous' in reference to their dogs removed pending certain rules.

#### City Clerk's Office, Melissa Dionne

- Interviews were held last week for the City Clerk and HR/Deputy City Clerk, the top 3 candidates' applications have been sent to Detective Cash for background checks. We should know more in the next few days.
- Elections are coming up, don't forget to vote on October 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- Ms. Dionne let everyone know that she will be out of the office beginning Friday and through the next week.

#### ON GOING PROJECTS

- The Mayor let everyone know that on the agenda for the next meeting will be the approval of the liquor license transfer for Three Bears. He did say that the Three Bears here in North Pole will most likely not make their March opening day, it will more likely be closer to Memorial Day. Also, he is happy to say that Three Bears has signed a contract with Pan Alaska to provide the structural modular system for the

next 4 Three Bears that will be built in Alaska.

## NEW BUSINESS

- Ordinance 23-11, An Ordinance of the City of North Pole Amending Title 2 Chapter 36 Personnel System

Ms. Clack *moved* to approve Ordinance 23-11

Seconded *by* Ms. Welch

All the Council members in attendance asked that their names be added as sponsors to this Ordinance.

### **On the Ordinance**

#### **DISCUSSION**

None

#### **PASSED**

Yes: 6 – A. Welch, Clack, Cromer, Keller, Skipps, Mayor Wech

No: 0

Absent: 1 - Jacobson

- Ordinance 23-12, An Ordinance of the City of North Pole Amending the Causes for Disciplinary Action for City of North Pole Employees

Ms. Clack *moved* to forward Ordinance 23-12

Seconded *by* Ms. Welch

### **On the Ordinance**

#### **DISCUSSION**

None

#### **PASSED**

Yes: 6 – A. Welch, Clack, Cromer, Keller, Skipps, Mayor Wech

No: 0

Absent: 1 – Jacobson

- Ordinance 23-13, An Ordinance of the City of North Pole Amending the Leave Policy for City of North Pole Employees

Mr. Skipps *moved* to forward Ordinance 23-13

Seconded *by* Ms. Welch

Mr. Skipps *moved* to Amend the Ordinance by adding 'Ant and all excess leave, above the maximum accrual, not used within the calendar year will be forfeited' after line 56.

Seconded *by* Cromer

### **On the Ordinance as Amended**

**DISCUSSION**

None

**PASSED**

Yes: 6 – A. Welch, Clack, Cromer, Keller, Skipps, Mayor Wech

No: 0

Absent: 1 – Jacobson

**On the Ordinance**

**DISCUSSION**

None

**PASSED**

Yes: 5 – A. Welch, Clack, Jacobson, Skipps, Mayor Wech

No: 0

Absent: 2 – Cromer, Keller

- Resolution 23-14, A Resolution of the North Pole City Council Authorizing the City to File an Application with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation State Revolving Fund Program for a Grant Under the Alaska Drinking Water Fund

Ms. Clack *moved* to approve Resolution 23-14

Seconded *by* Mr. Cromer

**On the Resolution**

**DISCUSSION**

None

**PASSED**

Yes: 6 – A. Welch, Clack, Cromer, Keller, Skipps, Mayor Wech

No: 0

Absent: 1 – Jacobson

- Approval of Snow Removal Contract Award

Ms. Welch *moved* to approve the Snow Removal Contract Bid

Seconded *by* Mr. Cromer

**On the Resolution**

**DISCUSSION**

None

**PASSED**

Yes: 6 – A. Welch, Clack, Cromer, Keller, Skipps, Mayor Wech

No: 0

Absent: 1 – Jacobson

- Resolution 23-14, A Resolution of the North Pole City Council Authorizing the City to File an Application

with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation State Revolving Fund Program for a Grant Under the Alaska Drinking Water Fund

Ms. Clack *moved* to approve Resolution 23-14

Seconded *by* Mr. Cromer

### On the Resolution

#### DISCUSSION

None

#### PASSED

Yes: 6 – A. Welch, Clack, Cromer, Keller, Skipps, Mayor Wech

No: 0

Absent: 1 - Jacobson

- Resolution 23-14, A Resolution of the North Pole City Council Authorizing the City to File an Application with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation State Revolving Fund Program for a Grant Under the Alaska Drinking Water Fund

Ms. Clack *moved* to approve Resolution 23-14

Seconded *by* Mr. Cromer

### On the Resolution

#### DISCUSSION

None

#### PASSED

Yes: 6 – A. Welch, Clack, Cromer, Keller, Skipps, Mayor Wech

No: 0

Absent: 1 - Jacobson

### COUNCIL COMMENTS

- Mr. Skipps thanked Mr. Williams for his comments tonight. He let everyone know that the 23<sup>rd</sup> is the Mayor's Bowl, North Pole High School against Lathrop at 7:00pm.
- Ms. Welch said that she is thinking that winter is coming whether we like it or not, talking about the snow plowing contract tonight has been another reminder. She said it is time to bring in anything that you don't want to freeze. She has been looking at the things that are growing in her garden that she would like to be able to harvest later, she is going to bring them into the house under some light to see if she can get a little more out of it. She reminded everyone for safety reasons since it is getting dark out to make sure you are looking out for youngsters and adults alike. She said she does not understand why people think it is totally okay to go out at night in totally black clothing and expect to be seen. Maybe they should consider adding some reflectors or something if you're going to be out and not on a sidewalk., your life might depend on it.
- Mr. Keller shared that since he was not at the last meeting and was unable to give a report on the borough meeting he attended that he did email his comments to the Clerk. He said that the feeling of



appalled is the feeling of the borough meeting and our place there as North Pole representatives. He said that it was interesting to have a formal conversation with the chair and then also an informal one afterwards pertaining to the really subjective interpretation of what muffles us with making comments on some of the things discussed there at the meeting. It is quite interesting, the interpretation of their ordinance. He said it will be interesting to see how this progresses as time goes on and as we continue to have representatives go. He said he has actually considered bringing a short children's book and just reading that as a report, maybe to help teach a lesson about getting along and listening to each other. That aside he said that he is super excited about the direction that we are going as a city. He said that Mr. Williams' thoughts tonight echoed his own about where we are as a city and where we want it to go. He would like the City of North Pole to be the shining example of how cities can come together and use that synergy of working together for the greater good and not just for today, but also in the future and how we can get to the next step. So he is really looking forward to seeing North Pole continue to grow, especially with all these projects we are taking on and the directors who are taking good care of the departments, he is super excited to be even a small part of what the city is doing. He said that he offers his gratitude to the Directors, the ones that are here and the ones who are not, he asked them to extend that thank you to their supervisors and to encourage them to listen to this meeting (just kidding). But really, he is appreciative to be a part of this great community and great team that we have.

- Ms. Clack wanted to thank the City Council and to Benny for coming in and speaking tonight and sharing his thoughts on where we should go as a community. As Anton said she would like to thank the department heads and the excellent job that they are doing. She also wanted to remind everyone to come out on the 3<sup>rd</sup> to vote. There are some proposals out there that we need input from our citizens on. It would be great if all you guys came out to vote.
- The Mayor said while we are giving kudos to Benny he will say that he worked with him at the FAA on the East ramp at Fairbanks International Automated Flight Service station. Benny was there when he arrive in 1999 and worked there all 13 years and retired before Benny did. He said that Benny was in maintenance and was very proactive in his time there. He said that he is looking into the Housing Task Force, when he went to research it and this is something that Fed Co was supposed to be taking over from the borough, that the last scheduled meeting he saw was May 30. He said previously the meetings were much more frequent than that and that they haven't had one since. He said that he is going to get to the bottom of that and why they haven't been having meetings. He said that maybe every other week he is getting a real estate email, but that is just houses, not the Housing Task Force, it is just a list of house from \$49,900 to \$499, 000 which house are on the market, how long they've been on the market and what the average sale price is, but it doesn't tell him about efforts and such. So, he will go back and ask why this has fallen off track. He said that he thinks he knows and that this is his opinion, and he could be wrong, but he thinks that the people who are building don't see anything in the tax abatement that helps them get to where they need to be. He said right now it takes them 10 years, each year they get a small amount, and he doesn't think that it helps them to do the following things, he doesn't think it helps them get the materials they need so badly, or to attract people to work in the construction industry to build the houses, and he doesn't think it helps pay them back for the interest rates that are 8% or higher that they have to pay to go out there and get to make this housing work. He said that there is a part of him that wants to go to the DoD and the Pentagon to explain to the powers that be what we

can do. They wanted to spend \$98 million on a barracks on Eielson. Imagine if we could take just 10% of that and go to builders and say what if we had this pot of money available to you, that would be quite an incentive, he thinks. He said you may ask why it costs so much a square foot up here, it used to be \$170 per square foot, now it is \$272. Part of what you're doing is you're competing for in a local market in the construction industry and a lot of the jobs are on federal installations and they get Bacon-Davis wages, which is twice what they would get working for a conventional contractor. He said that he thinks it is pretty much a crap shoot on these guys to try and figure out if they can make any money. He said that he has had plenty of builders say if they just build a one-bedroom place that they can make that, but once you get larger to 2-3 bedrooms or more than 1100 square feet that they can't make any money off that. He said that he is of the idea that we need to go out and see what really it'll take to get all this going, but he doesn't think it is a property tax abatement that is stretched out over 10 years. So, he will try and get an answer, he said he doesn't know if it'll be a good answer, but he's trying to figure out why we are not doing this. The last time he was at a Housing Task Force was on Monday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>. He said that what he finds out he will share with the Council.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Skipps *moved* to adjourn.

Seconded *by* Ms. Clack

The regular meeting of Monday, September 18, 2023, adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

**These minutes passed and approved** by a duly constituted quorum of the North Pole City Council on Monday, September 18, 2023.

ATTEST:

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Melissa Dionne, City Clerk