



**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, May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024, in the North Pole City Hall Council Chambers.

**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

Mayor Michael Welch called the regular City Council meeting of Monday, May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024, to order at 7:00 p.m.

**Present:**

Mayor Welch  
Chandra Clack – Mayor Pro Tem  
Anton Keller – Deputy Mayor Pro Tem  
Larry Terch – Alt. Deputy Mayor Pro Tem  
Benny Williams  
David Skippis

**Absent:**

Jeffrey Jacobson

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

Led by City Clerk Emily Braniff

**INVOCATION**

Given by Mr. Terch

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Mr. Terch *moved to approve* the agenda of May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024

*Seconded by* Mr. Keller

Mr. Keller *moved to amend* the agenda to move item a. Ordinance 2024-05 An Ordinance of the City of North Pole Amending the 2024 Police Department Budget from Unfinished Business and item b. Acceptance of Sole Source Bid and Contract from DHS & EM \$122,620.00 from New Business to the Consent Agenda

*Seconded by* Mr. Skippis

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- a. Ordinance 2024-05 An Ordinance of the City of North Pole Amending the 2024 Police Department Budget

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- b. Annual Health Insurance Update – Meritain
- c. Acceptance of Sole Source Bid and Contract from DHS & EM \$122,620.00
- d. Fairbanks North Star Borough & City of North Pole Emergency Medical Services and Ambulance Contract
- e. Stantec Professional Services Agreement – Support to Three Bears Project

## **On the Agenda, as Amended**

### **DISCUSSION**

None

### **PASSED**

Yes: Keller, Skipps, Terch, Williams, Welch

No: 0

Absent: Jacobson, Clack (Zoom connectivity issue)

## **On the Agenda**

### **DISCUSSION**

None

### **PASSED**

Yes: Williams, Skipps, Terch, Keller, Welch

No: 0

Absent: Jacobson, Clack (Zoom connectivity issue)

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Terch *moved to approve* the minutes for the May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024, meeting.

Seconded *by* Mr. Skipps

## **On the Minutes**

### **DISCUSSION**

Clerical correction to meeting date

### **PASSED**

Yes: Clack, Keller, Skipps, Williams, Terch Welch

No: 0

Absent: Jacobson

## **COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR**

- a. Proclamation Student of the Month – Jezamine Flayac
- b. North Pole High School/Presidential Tree Ornament

A student in the North Pole High School Technical Program requested permission to create a holiday tree ornament with the city logo on it for the Congressional Christmas Tree. She shared a wooden laser cut ornament as an example of what she is hoping to send to Washington, the Council was thankful and supportive of the request.

Mayor Welch reported he is attending the meeting from Zoom because he is in Anchorage attending the Governor’s Sustainability Conference. He reported he met with Brent Sheets and Randy Hobbs regarding the Combined Heat and Power Project during the day. He reported on events that he had attended since the last City Council meeting to include the Police Memorial, the Torch Run and Cruising with Santa.

### **COUNCIL MEMBER QUESTIONS OF THE MAYOR**

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

Scott McCrea introduced himself as the President of Explore Fairbanks and shared that he came to give an update on the regional visitor industry. Mr. McCrea stated summer used to be the most popular tourist attraction, but that winter has become a very busy destination due to the Northern Lights. Mr. McCrea reported many of the direct flights that will be arriving and departing from Fairbanks International Airport during the summer season. Mr. McCrea shared the month of March was the busiest month of the past year and growth potential is off the map with demand.

Mayor Welch asked what kind of businesses the City of North Pole is missing out on to bring in more tourism, Mr. McCrea shared there are so many winter events and that the city could benefit from highlighting the 24-hour sunshine in the summer. Mr. McCrea thanked the Council for their time and for their service.

### **COMMUNICATIONS FROM DEPARTMENT HEADS, BOROUGH REPRESENTATIVE**

#### **City Services, Danny Wallace**

Mr. Wallace spoke to PFAS mitigation planning and of possible assistance through the Alaska State Revolving Fund (SRF) that will need Council approval at the June 20<sup>th</sup> Regular Council meeting.

Mr. Wallace reported there are no significant changes at Public Works, he stated they have new summer hires, two employees in the Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) program and are working on a solution to the parking issues at City Hall.

Mr. Wallace stated the Building Department is getting busier with permit requests to include movement at Three Bears.

Mr. Wallace reported there is a Utility employee that is in the CDL program and called attention to the mural the North Pole Middle School students painted at the old utility building.

Mayor Welch asked if the City of North Pole would be receiving a tree from the top of the Polaris Building; Mr. Wallace stated he had not heard anything about the possibility. Mr. Wallace reported he met with Respec and did a walk about the city core.

Mr. Skippy asked if the light pole that the State hit had been repaired, Mr. Wallace reported it is now back in place. Mr. Skippy asked if the break in the pavement on Finell was going to be fixed, Mr. Wallace stated it was

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slated to be fixed during the summer season.

Mr. Terch asked about the Electric Vehicle charging stations in the parking lot design that Mr. Wallace had sent out, Mr. Wallace stated FAST Planning has a plan for EV charging stations all over the Fairbanks North Star Borough and that design was a possible concept. Mr. Wallace stated they have requested funding from FAST Planning but that the city does not plan to spend money on the project, only provide the location. Mr. Terch stated parking at City Hall is at a premium and shared his concern for power being pulled across the parking lot, Mr. Wallace shared the locations in North Pole have not yet been committed to.

Mr. Terch stated he was asked by a citizen about the generator that is sitting outside of Public Works, he shared the citizen wanted to know why it was not put out to bid. Mr. Wallace reported he had three companies bid on the project but that he did not go through a formal bidding process because of the low cost of the generator.

Mr. Keller asked for clarification on the three bids, Mr. Wallace stated there is a \$50,000 limit and he followed Code.

Ms. Clack asked what was reported when he did the city walkabout with Respec, Mr. Wallace stated he showed them around so their engineers could have a better understanding of where the water main pipes were. He said they have an office in Fairbanks, but they have offices all over the country and they wanted an up-close view. Mr. Wallace stated they wanted to see where the railroad was in relation to the watermains as well.

Mr. Williams asked who would be paying for the power if there were going to be Electric Vehicle charging stations in the parking lot of City Hall. Mr. Wallace reported he did not have all the details but that he would guess that it would be credit card swiped for power.

Mr. Williams asked if the PFAS Grant was received in writing, Mr. Wallace shared he has not received official notification but that he can look it up on the State Revolving Fund website and see that the City of North Pole will be receiving \$150,000 for PFAS Mitigation at the Fire Department.

#### **Police Department, Chief Steve Dutra**

Chief Dutra reported Lieutenant Jed Smith had been accepted into the National Federal Bureau of Investigation Academy which is the gold standard for soon to be Police Chiefs. Chief Dutra reported being proud of Lt. Smith for being accepted into the academy as it is a huge honor. Chief Dutra reported he had eight out of 13 officers show up to run the Torch Run and that he was very impressed with their participation. Chief Dutra thanked Mr. Keller for supporting the event as well as everyone else who participated. He thanked the Fire Department and the Public Works Department for their involvement. He reported his department is working in collaboration with Santa Claus House sharing that officers will be giving out 1000 coins to children for doing good deeds and they can redeem it for an ice cream cone. Chief Dutra reported this was a program spearheaded by Public Safety Officer Chris Illingworth and that it is exciting for the community. Chief Dutra shared Lt. Smith has assigned neighborhoods to officers to better serve community relationships. Chief Dutra reported he had provided Council members with stats and if they had any questions to feel free to reach out.

#### **Fire Department, Chief Chad Heineken**

Chief Heineken stated the Medicaid reimbursement deadline has been extended, which he understands is standard operating procedure. Chief Heineken reported the Fire Department cosponsored the Sound the Alarm event with the American Red Cross and it was a successful event. He spoke of the importance of having a working smoke detector in homes. He shared that they worked on Clean Up Day making hot dogs and talking with the

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community and that he was thankful that it was such a beautiful weekend to have both events. Chief Heineken reported they have offered the open full-time position to a current employee who is off to training and will return a certified paramedic.

Mr. Terch asked about the Apprenticeship Program, Chief stated three paid positions are filled and they have also offered three positions to volunteers so they can work in the program as well.

Mr. Keller thanked Chief Heineken for all the planning he has put into the Apprenticeship Program, Chief Heineken shared his excitement that they had received an application from all the way in Washington. He shared he is happy the program is being so wholeheartedly received and that he looks forward to utilizing the Academy year after year.

**City Clerk, Emily Braniff**

Ms. Braniff reported she had created an important date worksheet for the 2024 Municipal Election and that it is available on her dais if anyone should like a copy.

**Borough Representative:**

Mr. Williams reported he attended the May 16<sup>th</sup> Borough Assembly meeting and that the most exciting news out of North Pole was the progress of Three Bears and that it is graduation season. Mr. Williams shared that he invited Assembly members to attend the North Pole City Council meetings on the first and third Monday of the month anytime they would like. Mr. Williams shared he was asked about items that were not current and that he would not like the same kind of misunderstanding the next time he attends. Mayor Welch reported the item that the Assembly member was questioning was approved by Resolution in September of 2023, Ms. Braniff reported she forwarded the resolution the morning after the meeting.

**ON GOING PROJECTS:**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

- Annual Health Insurance Update – Meritain

Tiffany Stock and Angela Baker presented the options for health care insurance for City of North Pole employees, Council members asked questions on different plan options.

Mr. Keller *moved* to continue with the current Meritain Plan and not include Weight Loss Drug coverage

*Seconded by* Mr. Terch

On the Motion

Discussion

PASSED

Yes: Terch, Skippis, Williams, Keller, Welch

No: 0

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Absent: Jacobson, Clack (disconnected from Zoom)

Mr. Terch *moved to approve* Pre-Admission and Post Discharge Counseling

*Seconded* by Mr. Skipps.

On the Motion

Discussion

PASSED

Yes: Skipps, Williams, Terch, Keller

No: Welch

Absent: Jacobson, Clack (disconnected from Zoom)

Mr. Keller *moved to approve* the Maternity Management Plan

*Seconded* by Mr. Terch

On the Motion

Discussion

PASSED

Yes: Keller, Terch, Skipps, Williams, Welch

No: 0

Absent: Jacobson, Clack (disconnected from Zoom)

Mr. Terch *moved to approve* the 4-tier structure with a 20% increase in employee and family deductions

*Seconded* by Mr. Skipps

On the Motion

Discussion

PASSED

Yes: Terch, Skipps, Williams, Keller, Welch

No: 0

Absent: Jacobson, Clack (disconnected from Zoom)

Mr. Terch *moved to continue with the* Whole Person Solution Plan

*Seconded* by Mr. Skipps

On the Motion

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## Discussion

PASSED

Yes: Terch, Keller, Skipps, Williams, Welch

No:

Absent: Jacobson, Clack (disconnected from Zoom)

- Fairbanks North Star Borough & City of North Pole Emergency Medical Services and Ambulance Contract

Mr. Keller *moved to Approve* the Fairbanks North Star Borough & City of North Pole Emergency Medical Services and Ambulance

*Seconded* by Williams

## On the Contract

Discussion

PASSED

Yes: Skipps, Terch, Keller, Williams, Welch

No: 0

Absent: Jacobson, Clack (disconnected from Zoom)

- Stantec Professional Services Agreement – Support to Three Bears Project

## On the Motion

Discussion

Mr. Keller asked if Stantec has any proprietary information, Mr. Wallace stated he has many projects going and he is getting them confused but that this job is under \$50,000 so it does not need to go out to bid. He said if something needs to be bid out, he follows code. Mr. Keller said the project has been in the works for a year and rushing at the last minute is not acceptable.

Mr. Terch asked if it was the city's fault or did Three Bears change their plans, Mr. Wallace stated the planning shortfall was on the city's side. Mr. Wallace stated throughout Alaska construction standards vary so vastly and the city missed the plans for the RV Dump and the plans for mitigating flooding from the neighborhoods has not yet been fleshed out yet. Mr. Wallace reported it is a pass-through expense and a wise move for the city to have this kind of project oversight.

Mr. Skipps shared concern for Mr. Wallace's continued behavior concerning rushing things to the Council to get approval at the last minute. He stated things that end up costing more in the long run and it appears that Mr. Wallace knows and does not report to the Council until it is already too late.

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NOT A VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT

Mayor Welch called on his phone with a point of information, stating Stantec has been helpful to the city going back to when he was a Council person back in 2005, 2006. Mayor Welch stated they sent engineers from international destinations to work on Brookside Park, so it makes sense that they are working on Three Bears.

PASSED

Yes: Keller, Williams, Terch, Skipp, Welch

No: 0

Absent: Jacobson, Clack (disconnected from Zoom)

### COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS:

Mr. Skipp shared that the North Pole High School soccer team made it to state and updated on the NPHS Track and Field as well.

Mr. Williams encouraged everyone to roll with the punches and read some inspirational quotes from his book of quotes.

Mr. Terch thanked the high school student for attending and asking to use the city logo on a congressional tree. Mr. Terch thanked Mr. McCrea for attending the meeting and giving an interior tourism report, he congratulated all the graduates and wished everyone a wonderful summer.

Mr. Keller reminded everyone to register and insure their all-terrain vehicles and encouraged an education campaign about it in the community.

Mayor Welch shared kind sentiments about Ms. Braniff and asked her to forward the email she sent to Mr. Williams and the Assembly members to all members so they could see that she looks out for her Council. Mayor Welch stated he may end up attending a meeting just to see how things are going.

### ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Welch *moved* to adjourn.

Seconded *by* Ms. Clack

The regular meeting of Monday, May 20<sup>th</sup>, adjourned at 9:37 p.m.

**These minutes passed and approved** by a duly constituted quorum of the North Pole City Council on Monday, June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024.

ATTEST:

  
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Emily Braniff, CMC  
City Clerk



  
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Mayor, City of North Pole, Alaska

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May 20, 2024

NOT A VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT