



NORTH POLE CITY COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, DECEMBER 09, 2019  
NORTH POLE CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
125 SNOWMAN LANE, NORTH POLE, ALASKA

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Council Member Perry Walley called the regular City Council meeting of Monday, December 09, 2019 to order at 7:00 p.m. with the following Council Members in attendance:

Council Members Present: Santa Claus  
DeJohn Cromer  
Thomas McGhee  
David Skipps  
Perry Walley  
Aino Welch

Also Present: William Butler, Director of City Services  
Tricia Fogarty, Chief Financial Officer  
Steve Dutra, Police Chief  
Geoff Coon, Fire Chief

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG**

Council Member Perry Walley asked everyone to join him in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**INVOCATION**

The Invocation was given by City Council Member Thomas McGhee.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**Mr. McGhee moved to approve the agenda of December 09, 2019.**

**Seconded by Mr. Skipps.**

**Discussion**

None

**MOTION TO AMEND THE AGENDA**

**Mr. McGhee moved to amend the agenda**

**Old Business:**

A

**New Business:**  
**A, B, C**

**Seconded by Mr. Skippis.**

**Discussion**

None

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO AMEND THE AGENDA OF December 9, 2019 AS FOLLOWS:

YES: 6 – McGhee, Skippis, Cromer, Walley, Claus Welch

NO: 0

ABSTAIN: Mayor Welch

**Council Member Perry Walley** declared the MOTION CARRIED

**Discussion on the agenda as amended**

None

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE AMENDED AGENDA OF DECEMBER 09, 2019 AS FOLLOWS:

YES: 6 – McGhee, Skippis, Cromer, Walley, Claus, Welch

NO: 0

ABSTAIN: Mayor Welch

**Council Member Perry Walley** declared the MOTION CARRIED

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Mr. McGhee** *moved to* **approve the Minutes of December 2, 2019.**

**Seconded by Mr. Skippis.**

**Discussion**

Council Member Claus moves to amend the minutes to the December 2, 2019 minutes to reflect his AML report.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE AMDENDED MINUTES OF DECEMBER 2, 2019 AS FOLLOWS:

YES: 6 – McGhee, Skippis, Cromer, Walley, Claus, Welch

NO: 0

ABSTAIN: Mayor Welch

**Council Member Walley** declared the AMENDED MOTION CARRIED

**Discussion:**

Council Member Walley pointed out minute errors on the December 2, 2019 minutes that need to be corrected.

A ROLL CALL VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 2, 2019 AS FOLLOWS:

YES: 6 – McGhee, Skipps, Cromer, Walley, Claus, Welch

NO: 0

ABSTAIN: Mayor Welch

**COMMUNICATIONS FROM COUNCIL MEMBER WALLEY** (Audio 1:56)

- Recognize November 2019 Student of the month Carben Chagluak

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

**Finance Department Tricia Fogarty, CFO**

- Administrative Budget Amendments for Administration department, Police department and Fire department.
- Financials will be sent later in the week, some investment account interest came in that needs to be recorded then I will send the financial statment by email once those are booked.

**Fire Department, Chief Geoff Coon**

- In 2020 will continue to serve as the Interior Fire Chief Association President and Alaska State Chiefs Association Second Vice President with the blessing of the Mayor.
- Still working on the Alaska Assessment, halfway through it, should be finished next week.
- No word on the state contract for the Command Truck, it is going to carry over to next year. Will have to be brought back before council to be reapproved since conditions have changed.
- Training, Engineer Fagerstrom has completed a Fire Instructors class.
- Deputy Chief Heineken and Captain Hagan are taking a Fire Service Instructor 2 class. It is a more in-depth class than the level 1.
- Maintenance report, Captain Hamlin was in the office, he has been working on some hydraulic leaks in the wheelhouse. New Ambulance is going to be going in for some warranty work for leaks.

**Questions/Answers: Council Member Welch** asked if they were going to do some neighborhood caroling? **Chief Coon**, yes, December 15 is the start date, the truck is being decorated it is a lengthy process.

**Building Department, Bill Butler**

Nothing to report from Building Department

**Police Department, Chief Steve Dutra**

- Swearing in Officer Kurt Lockwood
- talk about his prestigious career
- congratulations to him
  
- Swearing in of new Sgt. Milne
- Talk about his prestigious career
  
- Sgt. Bill Bellant retired today
- we will have a retirement party for him at the end of December
- 20 years of service
- DRE, CVE, Traffic officer (award 80+ DUI's in state), GREAT
- Thank you for approving his handgun retirement.
  
- Attended Anchorage Executive Development Conference
- Video forensic – we will plan on getting class to North Pole
- FBI – will be conducting training –
- Talked about types of data that can be collected apps, google, weather.
  
- Asset Forfeiture = we have \$7,000, \$5,919, and a \$4,415 along with a truck in the pipe
  
- Stats – nothing too much other than the 9 larcenies – I went through those – no major spree
- couple from shoplifting
- couple from same domestic back and forth
- \$100 fraud passed fake bill at Tesoro (be on lookout for these)
- \$1900 fraudulent checks are Mt. McKinley
  
- Hiring – we really need to fix our wage scale for the lower tiers. We are getting lucky with laterals, but this will not last and our new officers could easily be tempted away. \$22.14 for a family of 3 is below the Federal Poverty Level. We should not allow this.
  
- Currently we have two openings.

- Both openings might be filled by laterals, so we are hoping for complete staffing levels by February 1.
- Shop with a Cop is coming up on Friday. We have 4 officers helping and lots of support staff. Starts at FPD at 5:30 and present wrapping is at Boys and Girls Club. Come out and help.
- I attended the APOA annual Christmas Party at Pikes on Saturday. It was a great event and we are thankful for all the APOA does for our Officers.
- Legislative Funding for Range update – We are working on the RFP for the PM expecting to make some big progress before end of year.
- We had our quarterly supervisor meeting – ALL new supervisors. Exciting we are going to start looking for a first line supervisor course to bring here so we can train all our folks at one time. Save us money.
- IPCC meeting was held couple weeks ago at AST – discussion surrounding lots of issues facing local law enforcement.
- We have opened our process for the new FANT/SDEU Detective since the departure of Det. Tibbetts. This process will close on Friday and we should be able to fill it by the beginning of the New Year. We did collect \$117,000 in grant funding in 2019 to support that position.
- The new car. It has been delayed once again and we are not able to get a lock down on the date for its arrival. We are extremely frustrated with Ford on this but so are a lot of other agencies.
- Just a reminder 4 Police LODD since Beginning of December – God bless those families.
- One reminder Police Officer and Fire Fighter Suicides are on the rise again. Please say a prayer.
- We are working on final versions of our 12 hour and 10-hour shift combinations. Everyone is excited.
- I just received the new Chena Lakes Corp contract and will send that over to legal and have it signed before the beginning of the New Year. This will be a new record. Usually they don't get done until just before May.
- We had our quarterly meeting with the school district officials. This meeting is where we discuss upcoming and ongoing issues.

- Major topic of discussion was Intervention and threat assessment.
- Works with all players principal, SRO, and counselors meet weekly to discuss students of concern. Forces all to meet and forces disclosure to assist in solving problems BEFORE they go bad.
- Thank the Mayor for his three training courses in Management and Human Resource.
- We had a week and half of boiler issues – parts were replaced over 5 different callouts – heat got blasted and bubbled our floors.
- Lastly – kudos to Officer Kuplack who graduated 9<sup>th</sup> in his class at the academy with an overall 94%.

**Questions/Answers: Council Member McGhee** asked if there would be a retirement party for retiring Officer Bellant. **Chief Dutra** replied there is going to be a party towards the end of the month.

**Council Member McGhee** also commented on the wage scale of \$22.14, recommended Chief Dutra go to the Alaska State site that is not a poverty level, unless you have a family of 5. **Chief Dutra** stated he would screen shot and send the information that he had to Council Member McGhee.

**Council Member Claus** asked questions about the DUI's and Assaults if there were any good reasons why they kept popping up? **Chief Dutra** replied he did not think the DUI's were to out of the norm as compared to this time in 2018. The same with the Assaults this time in 2018.

**Council Member Cromer** asked about the new hires if they were from FPD? **Chief Dutra** replied yes.

**Council Member Walley** asked if he could tell how many years' experience the laterals they were looking at? **Chief Dutra** replied 20 years and 14 years.

**Council Member Welch** asked about the Detective position if hiring internal or external? **Chief Dutra** replied stated would fill internally and still have 2 positions open. If no one internally applied for it, then they could advertise outside for it.

**Council Member Walley** asked about the forensics class being brought here, if that would be a joint venture between FPD, AST as well? **Chief Dutra** replied yes.

**City Clerk**

None

**Borough Representative**

None

### **ONGOING PROJECTS**

None

### **CITIZEN'S COMMENTS – (Limited to Five (5) minutes per Citizen)**

None

### **OLD BUSINESS**

### **RESOLUTION ITEM B 19-07, A RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING THE 2020 CITY OF NORTH POLE BED TAX GRANT DISTRIBUTION**

#### Public Comments:

Dawn Murphy with Explore Fairbanks asked if council received email, she sent last Monday. Questions that arose last meeting, the vetting that the committee is expected to do. Committee meets 1 time a year 2-4 hours, a lot of things that go into the discretionary fund, there is a lot of questions that applicants do not get to ask because they spend time listening to others giving their presentations and how can you vet an applicant in only 15 minutes time. If the committee is expected to vet applicants, they need to be given more time. Might want to look at extending application periods due to timeframe of deadline and presentations being done around holiday when staff are gone or just coming back.

Questions/Answers: **Council Member Claus** asked if from Ms. Murphy's perspective would a work shop a couple weeks before the deadline would be helpful as to what the City of North Pole expects? **Ms. Murphy** stated yes, as the organizations applying continue to grow.

**Council Member McGhee** does the City of Fairbanks have a workshop for the entities that want to apply for their grant? **Ms. Murphy** replied No. **Council Member McGhee** asked under federal tax requirements any nonprofit organization is required to have an EIN? **Ms. Murphy** replied that if you do not have an EIN and a state business license you are not a legal entity under the provisions. **Council Member McGhee** asked if Explore Fairbanks had a business license in the City of North Pole and is there any reason why you feel you shouldn't have a license? **Ms. Murphy** replied No it was something they were never requested to do so they never applied for it. **Council Member McGhee** asked if Explore Fairbanks is an entity that receives money for financial gain? **Ms. Murphy** said No they are a nonprofit.

#### Public Comments:

Wanda Adlesperger GM of Hotel North Pole. First time here and first time on Bed Tax committee. I as a little unfamiliar as to how the procedure goes. One concern is why were so many allowed to submit proposals if apparently, they weren't eligible? Why did they get to that

point of us getting a proposal on them? Can that be changed for in the future, not only did it waste our time, but their time and hopes of receiving funding. Secondly, since some funds were removed, at least for those that I was considering giving, I have difficulty understanding the baseball. My understanding from the presentation, the games are in Fairbanks, the practice is in Fairbanks how does that benefit the City of North Pole? The biggest backpack benefits families here locally, how are they justifying one over the other?

Questions/Answers:

**Council Member Welch**, are you aware when you were listening they have 1 big group, they split in 2, 1 group in Fairbanks and 1 in North Pole, so when they come out here they stay in your hotel and shop at Safeway or eat at Pagoda. **Ms. Adlesperger** apologized, she thought everything was happening in Fairbanks.

**Council Member McGhee** the backpack program is a charity, it is a social service and that disqualifies them for this program. Ms. Adlesperger replied had they had been told that, hey don't waste your time, in the beginning. Council Member McGhee replied he doesn't know that; he was not on the committee.

Public Comments:

Linda Hillyard, President of the North Pole Community Chamber of Commerce. Comments on the North Pole Bed Tax. Chamber is extremely grateful to receive bed tax money. One comment, there is a rigid system for everyone to apply. Certain dates, forms, financials for good reason. I feel that if all the people that apply for the bed tax go through that and get their stuff in on time, then there should be a more organized response from the Bed Tax Committee.

Questions/Answers:

**Council Member McGhee**, are you aware that under the Bed Tax Grant (quoted from the ordinance) awarded no later than December 31 of the year the applications are due? **Ms. Adlesperger** replied I did not, as I was going by the way it has always been done. Council Member McGhee asked if Ms. Adlesperger was aware of the process the Committee and the Mayor, and once approved is brought before the council for approval. **Ms. Adlesperger** replied no as that is always done behind the scenes. **Council Member McGhee** stated that it has never been stated that exact amount that night. **Ms. Adlesperger** stated it seems to her that it was always stated to them that night before presentation what they would be awarded.

**Council Member Welch** are you aware, example in 2014 the committee went before the council and after the council had decided what they wanted, their was a protest launched and went before the committee and back to council and was not awarded till January because their were a bunch of things that were incorrect. **Ms. Adlesperger** replied no that was before her time.

Public Comment:



Geoff Coon, seems like this committee is struggling with an identity crisis, and we've actually fielded more comments on Bed Tax questions this week than we have on typical fire department stuff. Moving forward, it would be nice to clean this up and it seems the Bed Tax always sparks the most comments from the community. I think it would be a good idea for the council and the committee to clean it up and bring order to this. I do have some time left, so I yield my time to Santa's Letters, so they have a chance to talk.

Public Comment:

Jason Donald, with Santa's Letters I have (Council McGhee asked if Jason could sign in) we already did our presentation, not much more to add, but today we were on HLN (CNN news) promoting Santa's Letters and Christmas time in North Pole. In the 2 years that we have been doing this we have expanded; we have been getting the word out. We have been in Vogue, Readers Digest and HLN. Last year we sent out 10,000 letters to kids and hope to get upwards of 15,000 letters out. Regarding funding and raising money, we do snow dumps, Go Fund Me, personal funds to pay for supplies and stamps. Every little bit of money we get does help.

Question/Answer:

**Council Member Claus** how cooperative has the venture been with the Post office? **Mr. Donald** replied pretty good. Mr. Donald also mentioned all volunteers go through a background check, nothing ever leaves, they have it in a controlled environment. Tremendous support from the community.

Public Comment:

Sharon Beeman giving my two cents in for Santa's Letters, there was a comment what do we bring into the community. Recently we've made a fundraiser because we need stamps. You can become an official Elf for \$20 and you get a little certificate and window decal. Talks about how business is taking pictures of their board and sending them to the lower 48 and it spreads from there. So that is one of the things that Santa's Letters does and has done since 1954.

End Public Testimony

**MOTION TO SUSPEND THE RULES:**

**Council Member McGhee** moved to **suspend** rules for 5-minute break

**Second by Council Member Welch**

**OLD BUSINESS**

Back on record item B under Old Business Resolution 19-07 resolution establishing the 2020 City of North Pole Bed Tax Grant Distribution, do I have a motion.

**Council Member McGhee** moved to reintroduce and adopt the City of North Pole resolution 19-07 establishing the 2020 Bed Tax Grant Distribution

## **Second by Council Member Skippis**

### **DISCUSSION ON THE MATTER**

**Council Member McGhee** - since our last meeting there has been a lot of information brought up. I just want to make a point. We cannot move this forward, period, and I will read why. Line 6 the Bed Tax grant amounts will be allocated by the North Pole City Council no later than December 31<sup>st</sup> of the year the applications are due. That is not a shall, not a maybe, says clearly no later than December 31<sup>st</sup>. Since we do not have a meeting available between now and then tonight, we need to make this decision tonight. That's all I wanted to say on that matter.

**Council Member Claus** – I think with the feed back we got from the majority of the applicants I would like to see a way for us to, it's not eligible to be tabled, that's what Council Member McGhee mentioned, my preference would have been to table it and give us time to go back to the drawing board, but I understand your all interested in finding out how it's all going to be divided up. If it can't be tabled, then during our last meeting, the amounts were divvied up at that particular time because it was felt that some organizations did not meet certain criteria, so right now I think that stands, if I'm not mistaken (Correct) so I'd like to hear a little more discussion amongst Council Members.

**Council Member Welch** – Well for one, that would have been my thing, I think there is way to much information that we all of a sudden received and none of us have the information in front of us so we can't go back and find out what the information Mr. Claus did. The letter that we have from Zane Wilson that was generated after emails to him from the Mayor and from, I cannot remember the names now, that there are a bunch of different information, this information should have been vetted, and by the way Zane Wilson, our Attorney looks at it, it should have been vetted by the City Clerk, who is the one putting this before us. As committee members we should not have granted people these monies then to find out later they were not eligible. With that in mind, there were programs that were taken off of this list, that we kind of got pushed into taking off that I just can't agree with. One would be the Lions Club. A lot of those things are a benefit for the community. I can understand why we can't support the World's Biggest Backpack because it is a Social Program. But they do bring people in with their fundraisers. It still puts North Pole on the map. As it stands, I cannot vote for it without the addition of at least those two other ones.

**Council Member Skippis** – Yes Council Woman Welch, I do agree with you that we do need to vet these better as to who qualifies and who is disqualified. Last meeting, we had quite a lengthy meeting on this and things was voted on, theirs one on her I don't agree with. With that being said, we were here late last Monday, we all agreed to vote, and things were voted on as far as the 3 that were taken off.

**Council Member Cromer** – I lost the debate last time, this time we need to look into the future, we've already had the debate last time and it is time to move on. Time to reflect on how it went down this year and think about next year and how we can make it better. We should vote the way we had it for the last meeting. Maybe next year we can execute a better plan.

**Council Member McGhee** – I agree with Mr. Cromer, we went thru a lengthy process and it passed 4-2, and Ms. Welch was one of the votes for it and unfortunately the only way to represent this back up is to move to amend and call for a special meeting later this month, before the 31<sup>st</sup>, I don't think this will happen. It is unfortunate that because of turn of events w/in the city administration that we weren't able to have employees doing what employees should do, but we do have qualified people sitting on this council that are intelligent enough to look at this and make a determination. The whole point this ordinance has to be rewritten and has to be redirected because it's too vague. Even our attorney indicates it's too vague. Bottom line it's the council who administers the purse, it's the council who makes the decision, Bottom line. A little bit of history of the Bed Tax, is tourism, that's who we are taxing, the tourist. Unfortunately, it's my understanding that the Air B&B's are sneaking under the wire, not paying their fair due's. It needs to stay within the guidelines of tourism and economic development. Unfortunately, it has the appearance of a charity give-a-way. In the past we did have a fund, from the pull tab tax, to help distribute funds within the city. From my standpoint it's about tourism and economic development. It is our jobs to make these decisions. We need to have a clear-cut definition of what we are going to do with this money. Read into record what organizations would receive what amount of funding.

Council Member Claus – an observation you made Council Member McGhee was the three entities that were zeroed out last time aren't here this evening. Mr. McGhee made correction in statement.

### **CALL TO QUESTION ON RESOLUTION 19-07**

Yes – 5 – McGhee, Cromer, Walley, Claus

No – 1 - Welch

Abstain: Mayor Welch

### **COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS**

**Council Member Claus** – Wish everyone a quick Santa Blessing, Merry Christmas

**Council Member Welch** – remind everybody this is the Christmas season and it is also very dark out there, it is hard to see people, so if you have children or pets, please outfit them with something that is reflecting, so we don't end up with more accidents out there on the road. Merry Christmas and Happy new year.

**Council Member Cromer** – Announce I will have my first kid here in June.

**Council Member McGhee** – Wish everyone a Merry Christmas, please be safe out there. I would like to say that being on the council as long as I have, it is hard to get information out there, and that I was disappointed to hear about the fireworks until about an hour until they went off. I would hope the chamber would pick up the original lighting of the tree. It would be nice if that could come back. Loves living in North Pole. Thank the council for the wonderful debates we have had. With that Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Yield to Mayor Pro Tem

Mayor Pro Tem Walley – Dubbed Council Member McGhee the Jerry Cleworth of the council. Apologize to the people that were part of the committee, it was sort of the mess with the guidance from us. Going forward, there is work to do, on our part, and to make this simpler for the committee and the people that are applying. Making sure they meet the criteria. Wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

The regular meeting of Monday, December 09, 2019 adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

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Michael W. Welch, Mayor

**ATTEST:**

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Tricia Fogarty Acting City Clerk