



**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, January 3, 2022, via Zoom.

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Mayor Welch called the regular City Council meeting of Monday, January 3, 2022, to order at 7:00 p.m.

Present:

Michael Welch – Mayor
Santa Claus - Mayor Pro Tem
DeJohn Cromer - Deputy Mayor Pro Tem
Aino Welch – Alternate Deputy Mayor Pro Tem
Anton Keller
David Skippis

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE U.S. FLAG

Led by Melissa Dionne

INVOCATION

Given by Ms. Welch

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Claus *moved to* approve the agenda of January 3, 2022

Seconded *by* Ms. Welch

Mr. Claus *moved to* amend the agenda of January 3, 2022 to consent the following items:

Old Business:

New Business:

- a. Resolution 22- 01, A Resolution of the City of North Pole, Alaska, to Authorize a Match Agreement Totaling \$56,907 to Install Asphalt Driveway Aprons Throughout the City Funded with American Rescue Plan Act Funds
- b. Resolution 22-02, A Resolution of the City of North Pole, Alaska, to Authorize a Match Agreement Totaling \$175,040 to Install Streetlights in the City Core Paid with American Rescue Plan Act Funds
- c. Resolution 22-03, A Resolution of the City of North Pole City Council Designating City Officials

Authorization to Sign on City of North Pole Accounts

- d. Resolution 22-04, A Resolution of the City of North Pole, Alaska, Establishing the 2022 Committees
- e. Acceptance of the Pollen Environmental LLC's 2022 Wastewater and Water Compliance Monitoring Professional Services Proposal
- f. Tuition Reimbursement Request
- g. Request to Accept the Resignation of Councilman Thomas McGhee

Seconded *by* Mr. Skipps

On the amendments

DISCUSSION

None

PASSED

Yes: 7 – A.Welch, Claus, Keller, Cromer, Skipps, Welch

No: 0

On the agenda as amended

DISCUSSION

None

PASSED

Yes: 7 – A.Welch, Claus, Keller, Cromer, Skipps, Welch

No: 0

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Claus *moved* to approve the minutes from the 12/13/21 and 12/22/21 meetings

Seconded *by* Ms. Welch

DISCUSSION

None

PASSED

Yes: 7 – A.Welch, Claus, Keller, Cromer, Skipps, Welch

No: 0

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR

- The Mayor is scheduled to have surgery on March 4, 2022, in Wasilla.
- The Mayor was recently in Anchorage meeting with the owners of Three Bears regarding the new store coming to North Pole off Buzby. The announcement should happen soon.
- While in Anchorage the Mayor also went to court over the Williams Alaska appeal with Zane Wilson on the behalf of the City of North Pole. The decision from the Supreme Court should be available in February 2022.
- He also was with another attorney meeting regarding the person that was injured during the fireworks

display during the Christmas in Ice festival a few years ago. He was there as a citizen, not as the Mayor.

- On 12/16/21, he was meeting with the governor's staff and the Bond Bank to talk about the infrastructure in the City.
- He also met with AIDEA and met with them to talk about housing in the NP area. He is hoping that CSG gives him the okay after his next meeting with them on 1/6/22 to move forward with a plan and that there will be a resolution for the project coming soon.
- On the 21st the Mayor hosted Rep. Prax and Senator Meyer, Bernie Karl, Brent Sheets and the Mayor of Nenana in his office where they outlined the cities legislative priorities. The same day he hosted a lunch at Pagoda for his guests and the city employees. Later that night he met with Senators Murkowski and Sullivan and the Secretary of the Air Force at Eielson. Senator Sullivan met with the Mayor and Borough Mayor Ward after and asked them to work on housing in the community to keep the Air Force interested in being in the area.
- The Interior was hit hard after the holidays by snow and ice storms. Many residents were without power during this time and the city has run into issues with where to put all the snow. The city employees worked 8 days straight during this time trying to get snow removal done as quickly as possible.
- There was an impromptu meeting on December 29th, with the borough and EOC and other state entities regarding the weather conditions. We are establishing a warm shelter at the NP library and will be working on that.
- Tomorrow night, the Mayor will again be at Eielson to meet with General Willsbach, the Commander of the Pacific Air Forces, to talk about housing in the area.

COUNCIL MEMBER QUESTIONS OF THE MAYOR

- None

COMMUNICATIONS FROM DEPARTMENT HEADS, BOROUGH REPRESENTATIVE AND THE CITY CLERK

Police Dept., Chief Dutra

- Chief Dutra announced the promotion of Sgt. Rosenbalm and pinned her badge on for the council and guests that joined us for it.
- Chief Dutra also congratulated Officer Knutson on earning his basic certificate.
- Chief Dutra gave a brief update on the stats from this year as compared to last year. He said the numbers remained close to the same and there were no significant changes.
- The new addition to the police department is pretty much complete and tours will be available next week. They are finishing up the check list of small things to complete. The IT equipment, office furniture and work out equipment and the blood drying machine for the expansion has been ordered and should start arriving soon.
- The 2 new police vehicles are here and in use.
- They are also working on a recruitment video and will be filming the last ride along portion of the video,

and it should be ready in the next couple of weeks.

- The damaged police vehicle has been settled with the insurance, we received \$35,350 for it.
- On Wednesday Chief Dutra will be speaking to the Interior Delegation about the need for a range and interior training facility. The business plan for the project has been completed, the plan includes the costs to build and maintain it, along with the pros and cons of the project, lead mitigation and future phase developments of the project.
- Chief Dutra thanks Councilman Keller for coming to the police station and getting a tour and passed on that it was well received by the officers.
- He also thanked the Mayor for the Solstice luncheon that he hosted at the Pagoda.

The Mayor asked how the vehicle accidents reported during the storm were for the PD. Chief responded that there were a few, but that it seems like most people stayed home during this time, so it was manageable for his officers.

The Mayor also passed along a congratulations to Allison Trubacz, admin assistant to the Chief, for her hard work in school and job and with her family. And to Sgt Rosenbalm for her hard work and promotion.

The Mayor also asked if they were going to do anything for the Sgt who recently left. Chief Dutra said that yes, they were, and he would update everyone when there was a plan.

Fire Dept., Chief Heineken

- 2021 was a very busy year for the fire department. There were 4,150 calls for the year, the highest year they have ever seen. He anticipates that 2021 will be even higher. So far in 2022, they are averaging 7 calls a day, over the 4 from the previous year.
- He wanted to thank all of the people who have been maintaining the roads during this storm, as emergency responders it is impossible for them to get out and do their job if they can't actually get there. Some of the back roads have been a struggle, but North Pole's Public Works, the State DOT, the contractors did an amazing job over the last week keeping clear what they could. They did have 1 ambulance get stuck and they had to call a wrecker, but only once considering the roads he felt was pretty good considering how busy they were during this time.
- Chief Heineken shared that one of the biggest problems that they have run into after the storm is that all the fire hydrants are buried now. The crew started unburying them as they could today but said that they will need help from the Public Works Department and the citizens of North Pole as well. If you know where the hydrants are in your neighborhood, please help them out and remove the snow from around them. Fire hydrants are very valuable and if there was a fire in the city right now, they would have a difficult time locating water.
- A new firefighter position was posted today and will be open until 1/22/22. Now that the new wage scale has gone into effect, he feels like it will be easier to fill that position. Chief Heineken thanked everyone on the Council again for getting that Ordinance pushed through.

- Last week they did have a firefighter test positive for COVID, he recovered fairly well and quickly and he was back to work today.
- The final master plan from Design Alaska was received today for the future expansion on the fire station. He extended an invitation to the Council to come out to the fire station and check it out and talk about the expansion project and the need for it. This year the station is 40 years old and long past due for an expansion.

The Mayor asked if the Chief would consider hosting a workshop at the fire station. Chief Heineken said absolutely. The Mayor also asked him to make sure that the Chief gets this project on the upcoming legislative priorities

Director of City Services, Bill Butler

- Has been busy working on a contract with a local builder to get his Resolution and developer agreement up before the council to begin development on B-2 in the Eagle estates. They will be putting in sewer, water and roads as a site for multi family housing. This Resolution will be included January 18th meeting.
- Following up on what everyone else said Mr. Bulter wanted to thank the Public Works and Utility crews for the hard work this past week. Public Works was a big help where there were power failures and generators were needed at the lift stations and the plows on the Utility trucks were just not enough for the snow fall to handle.
- Mr. Skipps asked about the possibility of a blower attachment for the Bobcat for the Utility crew. Mr. Butler said that the Bobcat needs to be replaced and that they have discussed the idea of getting a loader for them as the snow fall has been a lot 2 years in a row and they have run into the problem of being unable to handle it themselves. Mr. Butler said that the snowblowers were used a lot because the snowfall was too much for their pickup truck plows to handle.
- Mr. Butler also said that he has been working with the Mayor on the idea of contracting with someone to haul some of the snow out of the city. The snow is starting to be too much in the Stillmeyer and Eagle Estates areas of the city and they need somewhere else to put it. This is the first year that the city will have had to do this.
- Mr. Butler did say that he had a call as well about the standing water in Stillmeyer Estates. Due to the rain that we had the ditches are full and the culverts are blocked, and flooding is a potential hazard.

Mr. Claus thanked Mr. Butler and his crew for doing a good job keeping the sidewalks clear. He walks a lot when he has a chance and that the sidewalks have been nice and clear.

Ms. Welch also thanked the city crews and asked if we could coordinate with DOT to stop the double work that she sees that is being done. The city crews will clear the sidewalks, but then DOT snowplows come along and kick the snow back up onto the sidewalks causing the sidewalks to be a mess again. Mr. Butler shared

that DOT has the roads set up on a priority list and some of the lesser priority roads they won't get to until the later and the city tries to clear off the sidewalks as soon as there is a need.

The Mayor said that he usually mentions this to the Policy Board hen they meet.

Mr. Skipps added that DOT coming to plow the roads is dependent on the weather a lot of times too as to when they come plow the roads, if it is too cold, they will not run their equipment, so sometimes that causes a delay as well.

Finance, Tricia Fogarty

- This will be the first payroll on Tyler that will be done. There is also a new timesheet program that has gone into effect.
- She sent financials to the Council before the meeting and wanted to let everyone know that it is a month behind because they have not received the bank statements from December yet.
- Ms. Fogarty thanked the Public Works department for their hard work during the storm. She said that she has worked in the city a long time and feels that we have a great team made up of a lot of hard workers.
- Ms. Fogarty also added that there are some internal money movements that need to be made for 2021 and she will be working on that in the next few weeks.

The Mayor pointed out a few things about the financial statements that the Council received and how the projections from last year were pretty close.

Borough Representative

- Ms. Welch said that the borough meeting will not be till this Thursday when they talk about the redistricting.

City Clerk's Office, Melissa Dionne

- Ms. Dionne also gave a thanks for the snowplowing and city crews and to GVEA electricians who were hard at work restoring the power to the houses affected all over the borough.
- Ms. Dionne said that she has been working with the Mayor on the city personnel hiring. The city is looking for an HR generalist, as well as a Utility Manager, both positions are open until 1/14. She feels like there are some pretty good candidates for the positions. Th positions are on the city website as well as Indeed.com.

The Mayor added that we have also asked AML to post the positions on their website.

Mr. Skipps asked about the background of the Utility Manager and why the city did that instead of hiring another of Director of City Services position that will be vacated by Mr. Butler in a few months. The Mayor gave the history from the total compensation committee that was completed and that the city was trying to find away of alleviating so much responsibility on one person and to properly grow in all areas having one

person wearing so many hats was not the way to do that. Mr. Skipps went onto to ask about the public works part of the position. The Mayor responded that that will be the next part of the plan that we will talk about at the meeting on 2/18. Mr. Skipps said that he feels that public works and utilities should be under one umbrella with one person in charge.

Ms. Welch added that what she sees regarding the city is that there are not a lot of backups to some of the positions that we have, positions that we count on. She feels that it is important to have more people involved in the positions, so that the Managers can have supervisors that could step into the position if it was needed.

ON GOING PROJECTS

- The Mayor let the Council know that we are working on the Legislative Priorities and they will be presented at the next meeting.

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

- None

COUNCIL COMMENTS

- Mr. Skipps reiterated that the roads are bad out there and that DOT is getting to the roads and asked everyone to be patient.
- Ms. Welch thanked everyone who is out there trying to keep us safe. The police and fire and all the city crews out there doing their jobs, she appreciates it. She also asked the public to be patient and to please realize we are all in the same boat and we will survive this.
- Mr. Keller said that he was driving and noticed that the sidewalks in the City of North Pole are cleared and said that that made him happy because he sees that Fairbanks is struggling with this. He feels that this storm was a good preparatory time for everyone, to look at what you have and what you might need if this were to happen again. He asked everyone to be that community for each other and to take care of their neighbors.
- Mr. Claus offered a happy new year to everyone.
- Mr. Cromer also offered a happy new year and thanked public works for their hard work. He said it was nice to take a few days off and to spend time with his family.
- The Mayor said that even though being without power and internet was hard, in some ways it was kind of nice to have a few days without the luxuries we take for granted. He did go out and help a few community members during this storm. He said that the city is going through some growing pains and thanked everyone for the patience during this time.

Mr. Skipps *moved* to adjourn

Seconded *by* Mr. Keller

The regular meeting of Monday, January 3, 2022 adjourned at 8:18 p.m.

These minutes passed and approved by a duly constituted quorum of the North Pole City Council on Monday,

January 3, 2022.

ATTEST:

Melissa Dionne, City Clerk