



**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, February 7, 2022, via Zoom.

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Mayor Welch called the regular City Council meeting of Monday, February 7, 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 Skipps

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 February 7, 2022

Seconded *by* Ms. Welch

Mr. Claus *moved to* amend the agenda of February 7, 2022 to consent the following items:

Old Business:

- a. Resolution 22-05 A Resolution Establishing the City of North Pole’s Legislative Priorities for the 32nd Legislature 2022 Regular Session (Pgs. 13-18)
- b. MOU - DOL and NPPD Regarding Exculpatory Information in Personnel Files (Pgs. 19-57)

New Business:

- a. Ordinance 22-01, An Ordinance of the City of North Pole, Alaska, Amending the Travel Reimbursement and Per Diem for City Employees and Council (Pgs. 58-60)
- b. Ordinance 22-02, An Ordinance of the City of North Pole, Alaska, to Amend Title 15, Building and Construction (Pgs. 61-163)
- c. Ordinance 22-03, An Ordinance of the City of North Pole, Alaska, to Purchase Loaders for the

- Utility and Public Works Dept. and a Skid Steer for the Public Works Dept. (Pgs. 164-172)
- d. Resolution 22-07, A Resolution of the City of North Pole, Alaska, to Appoint Mary K. Hamby to the FNSB Historic Preservation Commission (Pgs.173-175)
 - e. Approval of the Professional Services Agreement with NTL Alaska (Pgs. 176-179)
 - f. Request to Purchase Fire Department Vehicle (Pgs. 180-182)

Seconded *by* Ms. Welch

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 1/18/22 meeting

Seconded *by* Ms. Welch

DISCUSSION

None

PASSED

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

No: 0

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR

- The Mayor shared that on 1/24 he tested positive for COVID. He has been symptom free for 4 days and that his last COVID test was negative, and he will be back in the office tomorrow, Tuesday, February 8th. The Mayor talked about the fact that the borough and state have some of the highest number of COVID cases in the nation. He also said that due to being sick he has had to postpone his surgery at that will now be in the beginning of May, instead of March like was planned. He said he thought this was a good thing because while he was sick he really didn't get a lot done and has a lot to catch up on.
- He talked a little about the positions that the city is hiring for and the urgency of finding someone for Mr. Butlers position before he leaves at the end of the month. He also mentioned that we changed the direction of that position, instead of splitting it up, it has been changed back to the Director position as it

is now. He is also working on an interview panel so that we can start the interviews as soon as possible.

- Mayor Welch talked about the F35's that are continuing to arrive at EAFB, the remaining 5 will be arriving in April.
- He has also been working with the command at Eielson AFB to put together a bus tour for the new families that will be arriving. Showing them the highlights of the city and just giving them more info about the area.
- Mayor Welch said that he will not be going to the Winter AML conference due to his health.

COUNCIL MEMBER QUESTIONS OF THE MAYOR

- Mr. Claus asked about where we stand with applicants to fill the vacant Council seat.

The Mayor said that we have 2 applicants and one of them is not qualified due to the fact that he has not been living in the city for the required length of time. We will be setting up an interview with the other via Zoom soon and that all of the Council members should expect to be a part of it.

- Mr. Keller asked about the follow up for the snow removal contract.

The Mayor said that he would let Mr. Butler answer that question a little later. He also said that he would follow up with Mr. Keller with some information regarding the electrical generators and central heat plant that he is trying to get going in the city.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM DEPARTMENT HEADS, BOROUGH REPRESENTATIVE AND THE CITY CLERK

Police Department, Chief Dutra

- Chief Dutra reported that they have been having sewer back ups the last few weeks in the new building and this morning there was no hot water in the building. He said that he has been keeping the Mayor updated, and working with Mr. Butler, Design Alaska and our lawyers on how to fix the problems. He said that it looks like the water is freezing in the pipe by the manhole in the sewer system, they are trying to figure out what they did wrong and how they are going to fix it. He said that he would keep the Council posted.
- Chief Dutra gave an update for the new hire, and they are working on some lateral moves within the department.
- They are putting a lot of resources into resolving the Wendy's shooter case and hope that will be wrapping that up soon.

Mr. Claus asked the Chief if he knew of the citizen complaining about the hospital bed that had been dumped by the transfer site.

- Chief Dutra said that he was unaware of the situation and believes that it would fall to the borough, but without knowing the exact location couldn't answer that. Mr. Butler jumped in to say that one of the adult care facilities is doing a renovation and that the bed was taken to the transfer site at some point during this renovation, but then someone drug it back out. Mr. Keller said that it was at the intersection of the transfer site and the Richardson.

Fire Department, Chief Heineken

- Chief Heineken talked about the open fire fighter position and that they will be wrapping up interviews this week. They have 3 qualified candidates and hope to job offer before the first of next week.
- They are currently accepting application for the Operations Training position. They have it advertised as 'open until filled' but plan on looking at who they have tomorrow, they have received 3 applications and will move the qualified candidates forward in the process.
- Chief wanted everyone to be aware that COVID testing is still available at the Fire Station for city employees. If you aren't feeling good or have been in close proximity with a positive person, just give them a call and let them know and they will have it ready within 30 minutes (call dependent) when you get there, they will run out to your car to administer the test.
- The last thing to report is that the road conditions have been not great and that they have been hard on vehicles. They had an ambulance that broke a shock mount, and it was most assuredly due to the bad road conditions.

Ms. Welch asked the Chief about some fire activity a few days ago on the southbound side of the highway and asked if our fire department was a part of that.

- Chief Heineken responded that yes, it was one of the buildings at the Pearson auto shop that his crew did respond to as part of the mutual aid agreement. Our engine was the first on scene, the fire was quickly taken care of and there was minimal damage to the building.

Mayor Welch asked the Chief to share what info he could about the shooting at Wendy's.

- Chief Dutra shared that someone went through the drive thru at the NP Wendy's and was angry about the bacon. He discharged a weapon at the building, and it lodged into the ceiling. He said there has been a suspect identified.

Director of City Services, Bill Butler

- Mr. Butler apologized for not have something sent to the Council ahead of time, he was hoping that things would slow down a little and they just have not.

Building Department

- There have been no new building permits issued. Which is not unusual for this time of year. There was a submission to do a renovation of one building.

Public Works

- Has just been trying to keep up with the snow removal around the city. It is an ongoing chore along with keeping equipment running.
- Mr. Butler talked about the initial outreach to Hubbard for the removal of snow from some of the neighborhoods around the city and the cost was astronomical. He did send of an invitation out to the public to bid the project last week. They prioritized the neighborhoods that needed the snow removal the most – Stillmeyer Estates, the center of town, and Highway Park, plus a few other roads around the city. He worked with the Utility Supervisor to estimate the number of cubic yards of snow at 105,000 and then asked for the bid to be an all-inclusive price for that estimated number. The bid should include the price to pick up the snow and haul it away, along with the cost of the dump site as the city does not have a place to put the snow. One of the advantages to Hubbard was that they have a site right in the city where

they can haul the snow to, keeping the transportation costs down. He shared that he has provided the bid packet to 5 businesses so far. His last day with the city is soon and he has the bid deadline set up so that one of the last things that he does will be to gather those bids and put together a recommendation to the Council. Mr. Butler said that he consulted with his staff on the requirements needed for the bid including a bond, they must meet our insurance requirements and provided basic guidelines including the time frame and the hours that the work can be done in so not to disturb residents.

Utility

- Not a lot of major things going on. They are tying up the loose ends on the Moose Creek expansion project. The final report still needs to be complete, but that cannot be done until everything is complete and there will still be some activity come springtime. There is still some road resurfacing that needs to occur and up to half a dozen new connections that will still need to be completed.

The Mayor asked Mr. Butler if he had heard anything back from the State regarding the information and \$ totals that we provided that from our expenses during the 2021 end of the year snow storm.

- Mr. Butler said that he has not. Ms. Dionne said that she also has not heard anything back from the State. Mr. Keller asked Mr. Butler if he thought that the city should not go with the initial bid on the snow removal work from Hubbard.

- Mr. Butler said no that that cost quoted was just astronomical and he cannot offer the support of it to the Council.

Mr. Cromer asked when Mr. Butler's last day with the city was.

- Mr. Butler let everyone know that it was February 25th and that his last meeting will be the 22nd.

Finance, Tricia Fogarty

- Ms. Fogarty said that there has been a lot of working going on with the conversion between Caselle and Tyler and that because they are essential working in 2 systems there is double the work happening. They are doing this to double check that the balances of the accounts are correct. She said they have gone down the wrong road a couple of times and now are correcting what was done wrong. She reminded everyone that it is a learning curve and that the work is extremely cumbersome. She gave a shout out to Michelle Peede for all the extra work that she has been doing.
- She said that the update for the sales tax for December and January have been done, the accruals for the end of the year have not been done yet, but we are extremely above what we budgeted for.
- The letters for the auditors are done and stamped, there is one that needs a signature from the mayor still.
- She thanked Mr. Claus for checking on the office and getting things signed and approved for us while the Mayor was out sick.

Mr. Claus thanked Ms. Fogarty and Ms. Peede for the training that they gave him on the new electronic signing system that is in place with Tyler now.

- Ms. Fogarty did talk to the City of Fairbanks asking for pointers with the new system (theirs is similar) and they offered some advice moving forward. Ms. Fogarty informed the Council that they may get some

emails in the new few weeks regarding check runs, etc and let them know if they had questions about any of it that they should call her. She said it is still a work in progress and encourages everyone to give their feedback on the process and thanked everyone for their patience with the process.

Mayor Welch recognized all the work that Ms. Fogarty and her staff have been putting into Tyler each week. The Mayor asked about the deadline for the audit and asked if we needed to change the deadline for it because she was really busy.

- Ms. Fogarty responded that they have and that she is worried because our fiscal audit is going to happen soon. She said that she has talked to the auditors and agreed that April 1 was the deadline, she said she believes that we can get some of the stuff to them by this date, but she said she wasn't sure about getting them everything. She asked if she could have a discussion with the Mayor about the audit and a letter that the City received regarding the audit.

Mayor Welch also brought up the Forbes Laundry business and the troubles that the city has had with paying their sales taxes for the last few years. He said that the Otis family has bought the business back. They have been closed a bit for repairs and refurbishing. The previous owner is still responsible for at least half a year's sales taxes. The Mayor said that if this isn't taken care of that the City will have to get CSG involved. Mayor Welch also took a moment to thank Mr. Claus for stepping up while he was out sick.

Borough Representative

- Ms. Welch said that there has not been a borough meeting since this last time to Council met. The regular scheduled meeting will be this Thursday, February 10.

City Clerk's Office, Melissa Dionne

- Ms. Dionne thanked Mr. Claus for coming into the office this last week and to Ms. Fogarty and Ms. Peede for all their hard work.
- Ms. Dionne shared that she had completed a couple of trainings this last week.
- She gave an update on the Director and HR positions that the city is trying to fill. For Mr. Butlers' she has received about 15 applications, however of those only about 5 are qualified. She said that she has not gotten the city application or the writing sample for a few of them and touched base with them to get those. There are 4 people identified for the HR position and interviews will be scheduled soon.

ON GOING PROJECTS

- None

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

- Tammie Wilson, as part of her role with the Borough Assembly (not as the Director of the Governor's Office) wanted to talk to the Council about Borough Ordinance 2022-11 that is coming before the assembly for the second reading this Thursday, February 10. She apologized that she did not realize that the City of North Pole automatically exempted a property from taxes if the borough did. The ordinance gives a tax break to builders who are building new housing developments in the area. Builders building

new units of 4 or fewer will receive a 2-year exemption once the foundation is in and that it is before December 31, 2023, the 2 years will be cut short if the units are sold. If there are more than 5 units there can be up to a 10-year exemption, that could be transferable if sold, this exemption doesn't begin until the units are completed. Builders need to complete an application for these exemptions, show a map and it needs to go to the assembly. The borough is trying to give incentives to get housing built for the new F-35's at EAFB. If the Air Force is not satisfied that the economy can support the military families, they could decide to not let them bring their families and no one wants that to happen. The ordinance falls on the cities of Fairbanks and North Pole, nowhere else. Ms. Wilson wanted everyone to know about the ordinance and to give them an opportunity to read it and react.

Mayor Welch asked how this ordinance conflicts/works with what the City of North Pole already has in place as a Military Facility Zone. He also asked if the exemptions would work for someone buying/building the property as a rental investment. The Mayor also brought up the idea that the city will be losing a lot of revenue if we didn't get the property taxes for these large developments and that he would not want to have to raise rates for others to make up for the loss of revenue.

- In order for the City of Fairbanks to be included in this ordinance the borough wrote it under the Economic Development statute instead of the Military Facility Zone statute. Ms. Wilson said that the city has the option of giving a larger tax break if we choose. The tax breaks work for rental properties as well, with the same rules applying. Ms. Wilson told the Mayor that the NPCC could think about writing a new ordinance that stated that the City of North Pole would not automatically go with the boroughs exemptions. As well, if the people were unhappy with this ordinance, it could be repealed by the voters.

Mr. Claus thanked Ms. Wilson for keeping the Council in the loop.

NEW BUSINESS

- d. Resolution 22-07, A Resolution of the City of North Pole, Alaska, to Appoint Mary K. Hamby to the FNSB Historic Preservation Commission

This Resolution was consented at the Meeting of the Whole, but the Council wanted an opportunity to thank Ms. Hamby for volunteering for the commission. Ms. Hamby gave a little background on her experience as an anthropologist. The Council asked Ms. Hamby to please check in with the Council on the projects the commissions are working on.

- g. Request for Customer Emergency Payment Fund

Mr. Butler spoke about this water customer that had a water line break during the winter storms at the end of the year, the heat went out in the house, and they could not stay there, so the home owners were not aware that the water line had broken. City Hall was closed that week and the leak wasn't discovered until the Utility biller came back to the office, she immediately notified the homeowner. The homeowner was given the City codes and was told what she could do to try and get the Council's approval to use the Customer Emergency Payment Fund. Mr. Butler said that the homeowner did not properly submit the paperwork. The code asks for supporting documents supporting the financial need. The homeowner was asked to resubmit the paperwork and that she was welcome to reapply for the emergency fund.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

- Mr. Cromer told everyone to be safe out there.
- Ms. Welch shared that she listened in to the recent school board meeting where they talked about the school closures in the borough. She said she found it interesting that the CFO pointed out the money spent on school support staff and the suggestion that money could be saved with the reduction of that support staff. She just wanted everyone to think about what kind of education we are offering our children and how these closures are going to affect the families. The schools are all going to be affected with the closures of a few schools and the movement of the 6th graders into the middle schools.
- Mr. Claus told everyone to be safe as well.
- Mayor Welch wanted to take his hat off to the State of Alaska DOT and all the hard work they are putting into keeping the roads safe for everyone. He said that he knows the City of Fairbanks public works is working just as hard and having their own struggles with the increased snow fall this year.

Ms. Welch *moved* to adjourn

Seconded *by* Mr. Claus

The regular meeting of Monday, February 7, 2022 adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

These minutes passed and approved by a duly constituted quorum of the North Pole City Council on Monday, February 7, 2022.

ATTEST:

Melissa Dionne, City Clerk