



**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 22, 2022, via Zoom.

**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

Mayor Welch called the regular City Council meeting of Monday, February 22, 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 22, 2022

Seconded *by* Ms. Welch

Mr. Claus *moved to* amend the agenda of February 22, 2022 to consent the following items:

**Old 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
- b. Ordinance 22-02, An Ordinance of the City of North Pole, Alaska, to Amend Title 15, Building and Construction
- 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.

**New Business:**

- a. Ordinance 22-04, An Ordinance of the City of North Pole to Fund Preliminary Investigations and Design for the Replacement of Steel Water Mains

- b. Ordinance 22-05, An Ordinance of the City of North Pole to Fund Updating the North Pole Utility Water and Sewer Standards of Construction
- c. Ordinance 22-06, An Ordinance of the City of North Pole to Fund Preliminary Assessment and Design for the Remodel of the Old Water Treatment Plant as Office Space for the City Services Departments
- d. NPFD Request to Purchase Radios

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 2/7/22 meeting

Seconded *by* Mr. Skipps

#### DISCUSSION

None

#### PASSED

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

No: 0

### COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR

- The Mayor read the proclamation for Vincent Hooper, the February NP High School Student of the Month.
- Mayor Welch said that he has had a busy last 2 weeks. On Saturday, 2/19, we interviewed 4 applicants for the Director of City Services position. The interview team consisted of the Mayor, Bill Butler, Brent Sheets (as a technical advisor), Aino Welch and the City Clerk, Melissa Dionne. Mr. Sheets and Mr. Butler sent him great feed back after the interviews. On Presidents Day, the Mayor and the City Clerk, Melissa Dionne, met to interview 2 applicants for the HR position for the city. He said that it is going to be a very tough decision, as both applicants were strong. The number one applicant for the Director of City Services position and both HR applicants were forwarded to the police detective to begin their background checks.

- Before the Mayor was out with COVID he presented to the emergency operations center what he could regarding the city's issues with the excessive snow and ice. They came back to him with more questions, and he said that he doesn't think that the State and FEMA are going to come back any significant amount of money to help the city deal with the situation. According to the weather forecasters we are set to get more than the normal amount of snow in March and April than normal as well. The probability of flooding occurring within the city is very likely because of all of this. The city is currently taking bids on the snow removal and those sealed bids will be opened on Friday by Mr. Butler.
- The Mayor shared that he had a scary incident going to the CEDS conference at the Westmark earlier today and ran off the road and ended up in a snowdrift. He thanked Chief Heineken for sending Cpt. McGilvery to get him out.
- He has half an hour late due to that, but he did make it to the Comprehensive Economic Development Survey conference that the borough is putting on. He took part this morning with energy ideas and this afternoon with tourism. He will be there tomorrow as well.
- He has been in touch with AIDA, they would like the mayor to support them with a city resolution supporting their plan to come in a put in water and sewer for the future housing expansions in the city.
- The Mayor recognized the City Clerk, Melissa Dionne's passing of her probationary period.

### COUNCIL MEMBER QUESTIONS OF THE MAYOR

- No Questions

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

#### Police Department, Chief Dutra

- Chief Dutra was out tonight and Lt. Lindhag filled in for him.
- Officer Dykeman just came back from the 3 week re-cert academy in Sitka. He is a lateral hire from out of the state and Lt. Lindhag said that the training went well.
- They have a few officers that will be attending trainings over the next couple of months. Because of COVID there have been many more training opportunities online making it much easier for Officers to attend and saves a lot of money on travel.
- The department is still working on filling the 2 open positions. They have a few laterals from out state interested in the positions and they are working on finishing up some testing and the required paperwork.
- There was no hot water in the new addition again today and the repair workers will be back to work on that so that hopefully they can solve the problem soon. On a good note, the sewer is not backing up anymore, hopefully that has been fixed.
- Lt. Lindhag warned everyone to please be careful on the roads. They have seen a lot of people driving much too fast for the road conditions. He reminded everyone to drive defensively and be safe.

The Mayor said that he talked to the State DOT twice today about getting sand down on the roads in the NP area. And that they said they would be working on that later in the week. He told Lt. Lindhag that when our new HR person gets all trained that it is anticipated that they will be doing a lot of recruitment and outreach for all the city departments.

### Fire Department, Chief Heineken

- North Pole Fire Department is happy to announce Demetrios Rasis has accepted the open firefighter position. Demetri comes to us from Chena Goldstream Fire and Rescue, he is a new paramedic and will be a welcomed addition to our staff.
- The top two candidates for the Operations/Training position will be interviewed this Thursday February 24<sup>th</sup>. Both candidates are highly qualified, we anticipate making a formal job offer early next week.
- As the interior continues to receive regular snow fall the fire department would like to remind everyone snow loads on buildings may become dangerous. If you suspect a building is compromised, we recommend evacuating until snow loads can be removed and the building evaluated and determined to be safe.
- The road conditions around North Pole and Fairbanks areas are in constant change due to the weather. Some areas have had ice and snow removed, while other areas are still more hazardous for travel. Please drive safely and be prepared for changing road conditions.

Mayor Welch asked the Chief to share the information that he had with the Design Alaska designs for the future expansion of the fire station.

- Chief Heineken said that he would love to share the concept and plans with the Council. The design is broken into phases, so that as funding become available the expansion can be done a piece at a time. The Chief said the entire dollar amount is about \$10 million if we started the build now. The longer that we wait to start the project, the more the prices are going to go up.

Mayor Welch asked the Chief to forward those designs to the clerk so that they could be forwarded to the Council.

### 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 has been quite a lot of activity for so early. Petro Star is doing some upgrades for the incoming F35's.
- We have received 6 residential plans for a plan review.
- As far as the Stepping Stones/Eagle Estates development agreement the plan reviewer gave comments and all the comments were responded to and accepted. All the signatures have been gotten and the Bond has been approved. They are ready to go as soon as the ground thaws. The development includes wastewater and that is a revenue that the city needs.

### Public Works

- Has been just keeping up with the snow, keeping the sidewalks clear. Just today we had another 6 inches.
- The invitation to bid for the snow hauling from the city will be looked at on Friday. Since the bid was put out it has snowed twice, so there is more snow now out there. They had 6 active contractors that asked for the bid packet. He reminded the Council that if the weather warms up fast this year it is going to be a bad situation for the city. The contractors are going to start uncovering the major culverts in the city to get them as prepared as they can for the snow as it starts melting.

### Utility

- About 10 days ago the heat exchanger for the pumping unit on the jet back truck failed. They couldn't use

if for the routine dump of wastewater down the manholes to keep them open. They ordered the new part and it arrived, but they needed to get it installed.

#### Moose Creek

- The major things are just the tweaks to the system. Testing is being done and worked out.
- The remaining action close out report is the one thing that still needs to be done, it is a very detailed report because it was a contaminated site.
- There are about a dozen houses that could still be connected but they did not meet the timeline and requirements. Some of the houses didn't have permanent heat or power. He feels about 6 of these houses will come on board in the spring.
- They still need to finish the resurfacing of the roads and must haul away soil still.

The Mayor asked Mr. Butler if he was available later this week to show the person identified for Mr. Butler's replacement around the City and introduce him to the crews.

The Council members offered well wishes to Mr. Butler in his retirement and thanked him for his service to the city.

#### Finance, Tricia Fogarty

- Ms. Fogarty is just back from her vacation, today was her first day back.
- She thanked Michelle Peede for all her hard work while she was out and for working with Mr. Butler on the fiscal notes for his ordonnances tonight.
- Ms. Fogarty told the Council that she sent financials out to everyone for the meeting tonight. They are through December, and she warned them that the numbers will be changing still as we continue to close out the last year. The sales tax numbers are off by about \$80,000, she just got those numbers in. She said the city had quite a few more revenues then were anticipated.
- FY 21 will be cut off soon and they will begin working on the audit.

The Mayor asked what the additional revenues were from.

- Ms. Fogarty said that the income from alcohol tax was up, the tobacco tax when down quiet a bit. Online sales tax was a new thing for the city. They are a few months behind in getting that money to us. Already we have taken in over \$150,000 more then anticipated.

Mayor Welch asked Ms. Fogarty to talk about how the city is set collateral wise and asked her to explain that to the Council.

- Ms. Fogarty responded that we tell the bank how much we anticipate that we will have in our accounts, and that right now we are over collateralized because the Moose Creek project has fluctuated so much. She said that it does not cost the city any more or any less for the collateralization. It is something that the bank pays a third party to cover our money over the FDIC limit. She said that right now we have about 4 million in our account.

Ms. Welch asked Ms. Fogarty why we had so much in our account with the bank over putting it with AML.

- Ms. Fogarty responded that we are earning a lot more interest with the bank right now. IN the beginning AML was the better deal, but since COVID hit the bank is giving us a better deal.

Mr. Keller asked about sales taxes and if the City had had people requesting refunds on the sales taxes.

- Ms. Fogarty said that yes, we have. The sales taxes are collected by the State. She said that the form is pretty simple, but since the City has an \$11 cap on sales tax she doesn't know how motivated people are to do the paperwork. Unfortunately, people who live outside the City but have PO boxes at the post office are being charged sales taxes, and that is something that we have to deal with.

Ms. Welch asked if we were being sent the money from these companies that are charging the taxes.

- Ms. Fogarty said its tough. We really don't know. The State of Alaska is the one who collects the taxes so we really don't know.

#### **Borough Representative**

- Ms. Welch said that there was a borough meeting and there was a lot of public comments. There were many people who spoke against having the mining trucks on the roads in the borough. They did not take any action on it at that meeting.
- She said as far as NP goes the ordnance giving builders tax abatements for new construction in the borough did go through many amendments, but it was passed.
- There is another borough meeting later this week.

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

- Ms. Dionne gave an update on the trainings that she has been working on. She is doing an upcoming Ethics training and a Mastering the Media class.
- She reminded the Council that she will be on vacation until the next Council meeting. Ms. Fogarty will be working on the agenda in her absence and that Melanie Swanson will be sending out the packet and getting it up on the website.
- She gave a recap on the interviews that took place this weekend. She said that she was very excited about the HR applicants and feels that they are both strong candidates.

Mr. Cromer asked about h is city laptop and asked that we send him an email/text

#### **ON GOING PROJECTS**

- The introduced former mayor Jeff Jacobson to the Council. His resume and letter of intent were included in the council packet.

#### **APPROVAL OF JEFF JACOBSON TO THE VACANT COUNCIL SEAT**

Mr. Claus *moved* to approve Jeff Jacobson to the NPCC by unanimous consent

Seconded by Ms. Welch

#### **DISCUSSION**

None

**PASSED**

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

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

- None

**NEW BUSINESS**

- None

**COUNCIL COMMENTS**

- Mr. Keller welcomed Mr. Jacobson aboard to the Council. He said that he is looking forward to how the Council is coming together to help the citizens of the city.
- Mr. Claus thanked Mr. Keller for removing the abandoned hospital bed that was in the road by the transfer site.
- Mr. Cromer welcomed Mr. Jacobson as well and said he was looking forward to working with him.
- Mr. Skippis also welcomed Mr. Jacobson and wished Mr. Butler a happy retirement.
- Ms. Welch said that she was looking forward to working with Mr. Jacobson and values his experience and thanked him for stepping up. She also wished Mr. Butler well wishes.
- Mayor Welch reminded the Council that Mr. Butler loves chocolate if they were thinking of a present for Mr. Butler. He did say it was a thought to name a new pump station in honor of Mr. Butler. In regard to where we are at with the chamber here in City Hall he will be calling about the arrival of the new carpet for the chambers and the offices. The air situation is good and so are the air filters so now we are just waiting for the baseboards to be installed. We got bids from moving companies a few months ago to help with the furniture movement while the carpet is being installed. The Mayor feels like by the first meeting in April we should be back in chambers, depending on the COVID situation. We also need to talk about the 4th of July parade and BBQ.

Ms. Welch *moved* to adjourn

Seconded *by* Mr. Claus

The regular meeting of Tuesday, February 22, 2022 adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

**These minutes passed and approved** by a duly constituted quorum of the North Pole City Council on Monday, February 22, 2022.

**ATTEST:**

---

Melissa Dionne, City Clerk