



**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, April 18, 2022, via Zoom.

**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

Mayor Welch called the regular City Council meeting of Monday, April 18, 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  
Jeffrey Jacobson  
David Skippis

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

Led by Melissa Dionne

**INVOCATION**

Given by Anton Keller

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Mr. Claus *moved to* approve the agenda of April 18, 2022

Seconded *by* Mr. Jacobson

Mr. Claus *moved to* amend the agenda of April 18, 2022 to consent the following items:

**New Business:**

- a. Ordinance 22-09, An Ordinance of the City of North Pole Amending the Personnel System Code
- b. Ordinance 22-10, An Ordinance of the City of North Pole Amending the Leave Policy and Pay Scale for City of North Pole Employees
- c. Ordinance 22-11, An Ordinance of the City of North Pole to Amend Title 4, Chapter 4, Purchasing
- d. Resolution 22-11, A Resolution of the North Pole City Council Designating City Officials' Authorization to Sign on City of North Pole Accounts
- e. NPPD Request for Approval of Grant Award to Long Technologies

Seconded *by* Ms. Welch

## On the amendments

### DISCUSSION

None

### PASSED

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

No: 0

Absent: 0

## On the agenda as amended

### DISCUSSION

None

### PASSED

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

No: 0

Absent: 0

## APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Claus *moved* to approve the minutes from the 4/4/22 meeting

Seconded by Mr. Jacobson

### DISCUSSION

None

### PASSED

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

No: 0

Absent: 0

## COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR

- The Mayor read the proclamation to the Student of the Month, Kylie Lambries, and talked to her and her family for a minute.
- The Mayor shared that he had a hectic schedule last week. He was in Anchorage most of last week with Brent Sheets (UAF). They were there talking infrastructure at the Dena`ina Center. The workshop was hosted by Senator Murkowski, Governor Dunleavy, and the Municipal League. During day 1 they talked general obligation bonds, grants, and funding sources available to us. There was over 1000 people at the event, standing room only as they ran out of room. On day 2, there were less people, but still over 600. In the morning he attended talks about water and sewer for the Interior Region. In the afternoon he went to workforce development. While he was there, he got to meet one of the undersecretaries of the Department of Energy, Kate Gordan. He hopes that he will be able to go to Washington DC in June and meet with her to talk about the energy project he has been working on.
- He has been getting a lot of calls about business and homes flooding now that the snow is melting. He has been working with Cody Lougee and HC. He also talked to DOT also to get the culvert that is by Pagoda

cleaned out.

- HC finished the snow removal project this last Saturday before 1:00pm. He feels like we removed a lot of snow, but at this time it is hard to tell if it will be enough. He said the amount of snow actually removed is much less than we estimated, about 70,000 cubic yards equaling about \$420,000.
- The last 2 F-35s arrived this last week at EAFB, all 54 are here now.
- Mayor Welch let everyone know that he and Ms. Glab interviewed 3 more people for the Director of City Services position. There will be a second level interview on Thursday for the top candidate here at City Hall. There is also another strong candidate as well.
- He reminded the Council that on Friday, May 13<sup>th</sup>, they are having the celebration for the completion of the 354<sup>th</sup> Wing at EAFB.

### COUNCIL MEMBER QUESTIONS OF THE MAYOR

None

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

#### Police Department, Chief Dutra

- Stats were sent to the Council and department heads before the meeting – as you can see increase in activity. Appears a lot of officers on training, military leave, road conditions slowed traffic. Significant drop in larceny.
- We are in full planning mode for May 13<sup>th</sup> Police Memorial Day, it will start at 11am.
- Drug Take back is April 30<sup>th</sup> between 10-2pm please spread the word.
- AACOP (Alaska Association of Chiefs of Police) Board of Directors has sent letter supporting our Interior Training Facility. This went to the Governor and legislators.
- He has been working on the Chena Lakes contract and hopes that it will be available at the next Council meeting, putting the contract start date at 5/2.
- They had a small car fire in the garage last week. The officers responding quickly to the fire, it was caused by faulty wiring and burned a hole in the bumper.
- The garage door replacement in the new edition will be starting next week. The wrong door was installed originally so it is being corrected.

The Mayor asked for an update on the sewer lines that Stanton installed in the new edition causing a lot of issues.

- Chief Dutra told him that the design of the sewer lines was changed based on an agreement with someone who was not qualified to make that change.

The Mayor let everyone know based on the issues that the police station had with this the building codes have been updated so that this issue doesn't happen again with anyone in the city.

#### Fire Department, Chief Heineken

- Friday afternoon the fire department was called out to a structure fire at the corner of Tanana Drive and Kenai way. On arrival fire was found throughout the attic space of the building. Two occupants had evacuated the structure along with their dogs. The roof system was a hip style construction making

access to the fire difficult. Crews entered the building and removed areas of the dry wall ceiling to gain access to the fire. The building suffered significant damage due to fire, smoke, and water. Red Cross was contacted and provided the family with immediate assistance. Our mutual aid partners North Star VFD, Eielson FD and Ft Wainwright FD responded to this fire as well.

- The new fire engine is finally entering the construction process at the Pierce factory in Appleton Wisconsin. I had previously sent a link to a documentary about this factory, if you did not view this previously, I can forward you the link if you would like. The apparatus is scheduled for completion in December, the manufacture has experienced some delays due to product shortages, but they do not predict our apparatus will have any significant delays.
- Last month we had a firefighter position become vacant after the resignation of Firefighter Justin Reardon. We were able to use our current hiring list to make an offer to Jared Snodgrass. Jared has completed all of the conditions of hire and will be starting his first shift with North Pole Fire Department on Monday April 25<sup>th</sup>.
- Chief Heineken also gave a big thank you to Chief Dutra for all his hard work in getting the security system set up for the fire department.

Mr. Keller asked if the person who had called in the fire in the house had been identified and wondered if the city could do a little something to thank them.

- Chief Heineken said that the person was not identified, but that they could put some effort into figuring it out and agreed with the idea.

Ms. Welch said that she would put it out on Facebook if anyone knows who the person was. She also gave a thanks you to the crew at the fire station working this last Wednesday. She went in to get a COVID test and said that they were quick and professional.

The Mayor asked Chief Heineken about the open house at the station and if public health clinic is back to hosting in the fire station annex, as well as the rapid COVID tests that they were offering.

- Chief Heineken said that it is scheduled for May 21<sup>st</sup>, from 10am to 3pm. Lt. Beckley is overseeing planning and has some great things in store. This will be the first open house in 2 years, and they are excited to have the doors back open and have the public back in. The annex is open on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month for people to get shots, starting at 2pm. Chief Heineken said that yes, they are still offering rapid tests for the city employees and the stock is good that they have on hand.

## Finance

- Mayor Welch gave the update for Ms. Fogarty tonight.
- Ms. Fogarty and her team are hard at work with the audit. The deadline is this week, and he hopes that they do not have to extend it, but it is a possibility that we will need to by another week.
- We are making headway with Tyler. But they are still spending up to 35 hours a week on the project.
- He has given HR the ok to hire someone part time, temporarily to help with the Tyler conversion and the data entry.

- Mayor Welch also reminded all the city employees that leave requests are now being done online in Tyler and that we are no longer accepting paper forms. He also reminded everyone that they do not have to submit the individual leave days for the week, the leave request will take care of them for you.

#### **HUMAN RESOURCES, Ellen Glab**

- Ms. Glab gave an overview on the interviews that she and the Mayor conducted for the Director of City Services position. She felt that they had some good candidates. They did ask one of the top candidates to come to City Hall on Thursday to meet with some of the Utilities crew and the mayor.
- She has been working on the employee handbook that was started last year and never finished. She has been collaborating with Chief Heineken and Dutra on that project since they were part of the original concept.

The Mayor let the Council know that Ms. Glab was doing a great job and that the city is lucky to have her.

#### **Borough Representative**

- Ms. Welch attended a meeting on April 14 via Zoom.
- There was a lot of public testimony. They are cutting the funding for the music programs in the elementary schools, and it drew a lot of people who wanted to speak about it.
- Mayor Ward said that they are still looking for lifeguards to be able to have the pools open full time. There have been a lot of citizens complaining about the hours being cut. They do have 5 going through training now though.
- Senior day is coming up on, find info on the borough website.
- The borough changed their rules so that citizens will be able to participate via Zoom and the numbers would go towards having a quorum (unless quasi-judicial in nature, a quorum had to be present in person for that) even if there is not an emergency declaration.
- They worked out the amount of money that they were giving towards the schools for this next school year.
- A resolution supporting the micro-reactor possibly going in at EAFB passed.
- There was a resolution honoring Congressman Don Young with a name change of the Fairbanks Airport, but they realized that such a change is bigger than what they should decide to decide and that it should be a state decision.
- They also approved a premium pay special worker program. To apply the company must be operating within the borough and meet other criteria. The company would pay the workers up front and then be reimbursed from the borough. Money is available on a first come first serve basis and details are available on the borough website. The borough has \$1,000,000 set aside for this program

City Clerk's Office, Melissa Dionne

- Ms. Dionne shared that during one of the last trainings that she attended she won a free training and that she completed that training this last week on April 13th. It was on Virginia time, so the class started at 5am.
- She has been spending a lot of time with the new HR person, Ms. Glab. They have been working on splitting up the code and separating out their jobs.
- Last Friday, Ms. Dionne and Ms. Glab met with RISQ consulting over at Pagoda and talked benefits and training with them. She said it was a terrific hour and that they both learned so much.
- She also gave the Council a heads up that there will be a workshop before the next meeting on Monday, May 2, to talk benefits renewal with RISQ Consulting.

The Mayor asked if we could start that workshop at 5:30 pm instead of 5:45.

- Ms. Dionne responded that yes she will start it at that time.

ON GOING PROJECTS

- Angela Kuest, with AIDEA was with us to talk about the land deal that the City is trying to work with AIDEA on, off of Homestead. AIDEA has been working on the environmental phase 1 and a concept design and she shared those with the Council. The environmental study conducted by Travis and Peterson identified a few issues. They identified the sulfa lain and the PFOS in the ground water, which we knew about, and the DEC recommends connecting to city water. The study also identified some abandoned cars on the property, it is unidentified if there are any fluids that could be an issue from those vehicles. They are making plans to mitigate that issue. After meeting with Eddie Packie of Travis and Peterson and they had a question if fire retardant foam had ever been used close to the property and the Mayor put them in contact with Chief Heineken for this piece. They also performed a concept design with Stantec for the 36-acre parcel, 5 acres of it are identified as wetlands. Options were 135-165 units of apartments and 4 plex's and included a loop entering and exiting from Homestead. She also has the utilities portion of the land to share regarding tying into the City's utility system. The final reports are being wrapped up and will be available to the Council soon. Ms. Kuest will be in town on April 27<sup>th</sup> and hopes to be able to meet with the mayor that day.

The Mayor shared with the Council that he has some additional information regarding the property and will be sending that out in the next few days and would like the Council's input regarding this land deal.

- The Mayor gave a brief update on what is going on with the Chambers and opening them back up for meetings. Alaska Universal Productions said that June 3<sup>rd</sup> is the shipping date for all the new audio/visual equipment. The carpet has been paid and should hopefully start getting installed around Memorial ay weekend. The Chambers will also be painted prior to the carpet installation.
- He also asked that we discuss reopening City Hall at the next meeting.

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

- Scott McRea with Explore Fairbanks came to talk to the Council and give them an update on tourism/visitor for the Interior. He gave a big thank you to the Council and the Bed Tax committee for the funds that we gifted Explore Fairbanks. He said that it was put to good use getting the word out for the borough and the City of North Pole. With the lack of international visitors, cruise ships and land traffic through Canada the year turned out to not be a bad year. They actually broke some records as far as Bed Tax collections go. They did host the first travel conference recently, it was the first conference they have had in 2 years. Looking towards summer he feels that we are going to have a great record summer season. The cruises are coming back and the additional flights from Europe are as well. Although highway traffic might not be as great with the high gas prices.

The Mayor asked Mr. McRea if he could ask some advice on a few travel guides that he has been asked to advertise in. He also talked to Mr. McRea about the possibility of attracting an extended stay hotel chain to the city. The last few years the fact that we really could use some additional hotel rooms in the city, for the military base traffic alone and the housing shortage in the area.

- Mr. McRea said that he would be happy to pass along some information about travel guides and hotels to the Mayor.

Ms. Welch asked about the German speaking tourists coming back to the area and if he thinks that ill be coming back this year.

- Mr. McRea said that yes, Condor is starting up their flights in the summer from Frankfurt and he feels that New Zealand and Australia will be big for travel here as well.

### OLD BUSINESS

- None

### COUNCIL COMMENTS

- Mr. Jacobson gave another congratulations to the Student of the Month. He said that he will be traveling the week of the 13<sup>th</sup> and will miss the Police Memorial and the F-35 ceremony and will unfortunately miss them. He passed along a good luck to HR and the Mayor in hopefully hiring a new Director of City Services. He also thanked the cities effort into removing the snow from the city core, he feels like it has/will make a big difference with the flooding this year. He said that the city streets are in good shape and he appreciates driving on dry pavement when so much of the borough is still wet and slushy.
- Mr. Keller also said that he is thankful for the snow removal in the city and his neighborhood. He also thanked the citizens for dealing with the contractors during that time and he heard good feedback. He is excited about attending the F35's ceremony and the growth that the area is expecting and hopes that we can come together with the community to look ahead. He also said he is happy for the additional sunshine and looks forward to more green grass.
- Ms. Welch asked everyone to keep forth the effort to be safe on the roads and walkways in the area. It is still a little slippery out there still.
- Mr. Cromer wished everyone a happy belated Easer. He took his daughter out for her first Easter egg hunt

this last weekend. He said that he still has a large puddle of water at his house, but that there was a lot of snow the was removed. He said that he is looking forward to the warm weather to come.

- Mr. Claus said that it has been nice being able to walk around town on mostly dry pavement lately and has seen many other people out walking around as well.
- The Mayor said that he did enjoy his time down in Anchorage and feels that most of the Mayors have the additional concerns for their cities as he does for ours. He shared that the weather was nice, the streets and walkways dry and that the scenery on the drive was beautiful. He reminded everyone that we will need a borough rep for at least one and possibly 2 meetings in June. He is also slated to go to the capital in Washington in June but might have to postpone till July depending on his health.

Mr. Jacobson *moved* to adjour

Seconded *by* Mr. Claus

The regular meeting of Monday, April 4, 2022 adjourned at 8:48 p.m.

**These minutes passed and approved** by a duly constituted quorum of the North Pole City Council on Monday, April 18, 2022.

**ATTEST:**

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Melissa Dionne, City Clerk