



**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 27, 2023, in the North Pole City Hall Chambers.

**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

Mayor Welch called the regular City Council meeting of Monday, February 27, 2023, to order at 7:00 p.m.

**Present:**

Jeffrey Jacobson – Mayor Pro Tem  
DeJohn Cromer – Deputy Mayor Pro Tem  
Anton Keller -Alt. Deputy Mayor Pro Tem  
Chandra Clack  
Aino Welch  
David Skipps

**Absent/Excused:**

None

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

Led by Melissa Dionne

**INVOCATION**

Given by Ms. Clack

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Ms. Clack *moved to* approve the agenda of February 27, 2023

Seconded *by* Ms. Welch

**On the agenda**

**DISCUSSION**

None

**PASSED**

Yes: 7 – A. Welch, Clack, Skipps, Jacobson, Cromer, Keller, Welch

No: 0

Absent: 0

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Ms. Clack *moved to* approve the minutes from the 2/6/2023 meeting

Seconded *by* Ms. Welch

## **DISCUSSION**

None

## **PASSED**

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

No: 0

Absent: 0

## **COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR**

- Student of the Month for February 2023 – Marty Goodwin
- The Mayor shared some of the details of the winter legislative session for the 33<sup>rd</sup> legislature in Juneau that the Mayor, Council Woman Welch and Director of City Services Danny Wallace just returned from. They had the chance to talk to many senators and representatives, including our local ones, as well as a US senator. He said that a lot of the things they were trying to do and people they were trying to talk to were disrupted because many people were sick, the COVID numbers were high. The main take away idea to the cities and the state was to figure out how to pay for the things that you need yourselves. Learn your people, know what they want and what they need and learn to pay it yourself. On the way back for Juneau they stopped in Anchorage to talk to 2 Bears Environmental Consulting regarding grant writing for the city, as well as HMM regarding potential environmental investigations for the combined heat and power plant.

## **COUNCIL MEMBER QUESTIONS OF THE MAYOR**

- None

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

- None

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

### **Police Department, Chief Dutra**

- Both officers returned from academy successfully completing their recert.
- Officer Koerner received his Basic Police Certificate.
- Two cars have been ordered.
- Lt. Smith has taught active shooter at Fairbanks Surgery Center.
- We are scheduling an internet education campaign for parents.
- Finished up Guys Read at 3 local schools Tic-brown, Midnight Sun, and NP Elementary.
- Spoke in front of Senate Judiciary and to Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson on the Policy Project.
- We have started our hiring app and receiving a lot of inquiries. Officers are engaging applicants in real time. Lt. Smith is attending FTWW & Eielson out processing and getting some interest.
- New videos are being put up on social media and being boosted regularly.
- Doing a self – defense class on Saturday for girls' soccer team

- Completed the range update for APOA and sent to legislators.
- I attended APOA BOD meeting on Friday.

The Mayor asked Chief Dutra why the stats were up so much this early in the year.

- Chief Dutra said that we have a couple of new folks and that the traffic officers that are being proactive.

The Mayor also shared some information about the police departments' legislative priority of a range based on feedback from his trip to Juneau.

Councilwoman Welch shared some information that she gained while she was in Juneau after talking to a Trooper on this issue and told Chief that he will hopefully be getting a call from him.

### Fire Department, Chief Heineken

- The new fire engine is now coming along quickly. The latest photos show it is starting to look like a fire engine and the cab interior is fairly complete. They have now given us a more precise timeline for completion, if all goes as planned the final inspection of the apparatus is being planned for the last week of April in Appleton Wisconsin.
- Conditional job offers have been made to two individuals who will fill our current firefighter openings. The candidates must pass physical testing and a physician's firefighter physical as part of the conditional offer. We anticipate having start dates sometime in March.
- Karl Johansson with Johansson Wing Architects met with us on Wednesday February 15th. During the meeting we were able to show him the current station layout and started planning for the new station design. Most importantly we discussed where the new station would be built on the two lots between the current parking pad and Taco King. The good news is we do not see any issues with the space available to build.

### Finance, Tricia Fogarty

- Ms. Fogarty said that last week was her first full week back from vacation and that her department had some training with Tyler. They have has some issues with assessment billing and will be talking to Tyler on Wednesday for this. The sales tax and business license portion should be live in March and then the conversion will be done.
- She had an initial meeting with Altman & Rodgers, she let them know that we would be moving forward with contracting with them but not until after the 22 year is closed out.
- She said that she has not had any contact with Alliance accounting regarding the audit this year. She said that normally they have an engagement letter and a list of initial docs to send in by now.

Councilwoman Welch asked if the local AirBNB and VRBO rentals are paying their taxes.

- Ms. Fogarty said that her department does check occasionally and recently they have reached out to a few and they have come in and gotten business licenses.

### Director of City Services, Danny Wallace

Building Department

- Although things are fairly slow, we've had inquiries about building permit requirements from FNSB on both the Wescott Pool repairs and a fire suppression backflow device installation at their facilities here in town. We're working with both project managers on the requirements.

Public Works Department

- Snowplowing occurred over the past few days and we received a couple of calls (on was outside the City limits). No significant issues and the concerns were resolved.
- We received bids from Phil Hubbard on removing snow to mitigate flooding this spring. This would involve pulling snow from the ditches and moving to his storage location. We're still working through these. Of note, two locations are initially targeted Homestead Road from the corner of W. 1st Ave to corner of Old Richardson Hwy (right side only - \$8920.00) and Fourth Ave to Holiday Dr. down to W. Fifth Ave (\$11,000.00, both sides). We're taking a hard look at these.
- With the help of the Police Department, we submitted a grant application for a backup generator for our Public Works Facility – provides needed redundancy.
- FNSB will be removing hard pack from the Transfer Site this week.

#### **Utility Department**

- No significant utilities issues over the last couple of weeks.
- Our engineering contract with Respec (an engineering firm we routinely work with for City projects) is included in the Council Packet (p. 30-42). This is a requirement for our Stormwater Grant (being finalized) and will provide advantages when we need to reach out for engineering support for other projects. This is non-binding (we are not bound to use them for projects), but saves money and time if Respec is the best option for City work. I can provide additional details during the New Business portion of the meeting.
- Last week, we had our third working group discussion on ways to mitigate the chronic funding for sewer utilities. The group included our Utilities Supervisor, Paul Trissel, Melanie Swanson, Michelle Peede, and me. We ranked six potential options for the City and discussed/validated. During the next meeting (in March), we'll finalize a briefing for presentation to the Council during the second week of March.
- I'll continue to work on grant submissions for our key priorities (Water Main Replacement, Brookside Park Utilities Support and others), based on feedback from DEC and Senator Murkowski's staff.

#### **Moose Creek**

- No significant change to this project. We're still projecting closing this out on June 30, 2023.

#### **Other items**

- Information on our trip to Juneau to include meetings with key leaders and the Alaska Municipal League Conference was emailed to the Council. If you did not receive, let me know. This was a productive trip and it exposed me to the Legislature's operations and constraints and provided insight on the overall way forward for support to our key priorities.

The Mayor asked Mr. Wallace to share some of his thoughts after talking to the legislature in Juneau.

- Mr. Wallace said that the trip was good and he learned a lot about the process.

Mr. Jacobson asked about where we are with the design of the steel water mains replacement.

- Mr. Wallace said that the initial plan was done by Stantec, but they are moving to Repec and have a 15% design document that was done in December 2022.

#### **Human Resources, Ellen Glab**

- Ms. Glab is out on maternity leave.

#### **Borough Representative**

Borough meeting 2/23/23

- Ms. Clack was the representative for this meeting.
- She gave the assembly updates on Taco King and Saigon Palace restaurants that are opening in NP.

- The borough is considering Ord 23-18 and placing a playground into Brookside Park. Open comments from the public will be in March.
- Ms. Clack also shared that she attended the ribbon cutting for the new VA clinic. She was able to talk to Dan Sullivan and Lisa Murkowski. Dan Sullivan told her that he would like to send his assistant out to talk to the Council sometime in March.

The Mayor asked about the new VA clinic and what she thought of it.

- Ms. Clack said that it was very nice and with the additional doctors, like chiropractors and physical therapists, available to the vets without going onto Fort Wainwright is going to be a good thing.

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

- Ms. Dionne shared that her vacation was amazing and relaxing and that her batteries are fully charged.
- The website is moving along, we are in the migration stage and training should be scheduled soon along with the first look at the completed site.
- Ms. Dionne attended an Athenian dialogue last week on the book 'The Gifts of Imperfection' she said that it was a great read and recommended it to everyone.

The Mayor asked about linking other community businesses and organizations to the new website.

- Ms. Dionne said that yes, there is a community link section.

#### ON GOING PROJECTS

- Bullying & Harassment policy for the city employees
  - The Council debated the details for a little while of this policy. The Council agreed that they did not need a workshop on the topic and that it would be on the agenda for the next Council meeting.

#### New Business

- Resolution 23-04, A Resolution of the City of North Pole, Alaska, to Approve the 2023 City of North Pole Committees

Mr. Jacobson *moved* to approve the Resolution

Seconded *by* Ms. Clack

#### **On the Resolution**

##### **DISCUSSION**

None

##### **PASSED**

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

No: 0

Absent: 0

- Approval of Master Services Agreement with Respec

Mr. Jacobson *moved* to approve the agreement.

Seconded *by* Ms. Welch

## On the Agreement

### DISCUSSION

None

### PASSED

Yes: 7 – A. Welch, Clack, Skipps, Jacobson, Cromer, Keller, Welch

No: 0

Absent: 0

- Authorization to Initiate a Seasonal Police Office Hiring Program for the NPPD

Mr. Keller *moved* to approve the authorization

Seconded *by* Ms. Clack

## On the Authorization

### DISCUSSION

None

### PASSED

Yes: 7 – A. Welch, Clack, Skipps, Jacobson, Cromer, Keller, Welch

No: 0

Absent: 0

- Approval of 2023 ICAC Agreement

Mr. Keller *moved* to approve the agreement

Seconded *by* Ms. Clack

## On the Agreement

### DISCUSSION

None

### PASSED

Yes: 7 – A. Welch, Clack, Skipps, Jacobson, Cromer, Keller, Welch

No: 0

Absent: 0

## COUNCIL COMMENTS

- Ms. Welch shared while in Juneau that she had a talk with the presenter of the alcohol board information regarding our officers dealing with people/drivers under the influence of marijuana. She said that quite frequently at her school she will have parents pull up to drop off kids that have smoke rolling out when they open their car doors. She asked the public listening tonight that if they are going to partake in marijuana to please not do it while they are driving and especially while children are around. It not only puts the kids getting in and out of cars at the school at risk, but definitely the kids that are in the car while

they are driving. She asked to please think about it before you light up.

- Mr. Jacobson thanked the Council for their continued interest in the bullying and harassment policy. After the Council passed the Resolution opposing the Mahn Cho mine recently the Council was approached by Kinross with talking points against the resolution. He wanted, again, to thank the Council pointing out the issues with the Kinross plan and what these heavy loaded trucks are going to do to our transportation system. He was sick last week and was unable to travel to Juneau, one of the things that he wanted to talk to the delegation about was where the legislature and the governor stands on funding the Northern Region transportation as far as increasing what they have consistently decreased year after year with road maintenance. The Northern Region has suffered about a 40% decrease in funding. This trucking plan alone is going to consume millions of dollars in snow removal, patching and road repair and there is no plan in place to hold Kinross responsible for any contributions or maintenance. The State is telling the local communities that there is no money and that the communities need to find a way to pay their way. He feels like we did our due diligence with the resolution saying that we do not agree with the Kinross plan because of the following reasons. Mr. Jacobson said that he passed out an article to everyone about the IGU signing a deal to purchase gas from the North Slope, the first sale of North Slope gas to a nonlocal utility. It is exciting that the IGU is helping to help air quality and lower home heating costs. Once Kinross announced their trucking plan the costs for a truck to go Prudhoe Bay to Fairbanks nearly doubled in labor costs because that is the cost of hiring nearly 200 truck drivers locally there is not a labor market. So when you start talking about hiring drivers for snow removal to prevent flooding you are not going to be able to get it for what we got last year, your going to pay double or triple, there are real costs. He said that he is not trying to be a Debbie downer, but there are 2 sides to the equation. Everyone is struggling to find qualified drivers and mechanics, police officers and firefighters and we have to look at it with a holistic approach and what is in the best interest of our residents and our community. Again he is not anti-Kinross he is just very concerned about the health and safety of the community and residents. Today while driving he saw a vehicle going around 85 miles per hour, weaving in and out of traffic and he just thought about what would happen with those additional trucks on the road and people driving like that and what the accidents are going to look like. He said that he is glad that we have as many traffic stops as we do in North Pole, that does not happen in Fairbanks, and he thanks the police department for keeping our roads safe and enforcing the laws.
- The Mayor said that he first wanted to comment on his Juneau trip, some of the members that really impressed him gave him the impression that things are going to be good in this state and in this country that they are willing as freshman to come on board and stand their ground and explain their positions. Now that doesn't mean that were in agreement with them, or that he is agreement with them. When it came to Kinross he thought it was important for him to share what we did and why we did it. He let them know that he has traveled that highway several times and has seen how people try and fly around big trucks on the road especially in the summer construction season and slow downs from that and pilot cars. He said that the area of the highway that he was most concerned about is just past EAFB coming into North Pole, that there would often be a whole string of cars on that narrow part of the road with no barriers between the oncoming traffic. There were a few people in Juneau that really impressed him with their knowledge in Juneau. He shared a recent traffic issue that almost occurred while he was a passenger that almost became a bad accident. The Mayor said that he feels one of the worst things that was done

was changing the speed limit on the highway to 65 and that he almost thinks that from 12 mile to Laurence road that we should be able to do a seasonal adjustment to the speed limit and rolling it back to around 50 miles per hour. He said that it is a lot of work dealing with the folks from Juneau, when you start listening to their words you start relaying to you what their baggage is, their experience. We are all products of our experiences, it is not always cut and dry, a lot of people don't know how much blood, sweat and tears goes into a project to try and get it approved, to get it out there as a legislative priority. So we just have to keep hitting it and hitting it and hitting it to get through. You can only tax so much and it is one thing for a US Senator to stand there and say that we can't be 49<sup>th</sup> place in everything and they are worried about why people are leaving Alaska. He said that he was recently approached by a local resident that had an interest in tying into the city utility from a neighborhood that previously had said they were not interested. He said that we may have to think about having a Town Hall meeting to see what the rest of the neighborhood and people in Baker and Northstar subdivision are interested as well. If we are going to replace the old city main lines it might behoove us to tackle the expansion at the same time. He thanked everyone for letting him say what he learned and what keeps going on, he was happy to represent us down in Juneau.

## ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Welch and Mr. Jacobson *moved* to adjourn

The regular meeting of Monday, February 27, 2023, adjourned at 8:34 PM.

**These minutes passed and approved** by a duly constituted quorum of the North Pole City Council on Monday, February 27, 2023.

**ATTEST:**

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Melissa Dionne, City Clerk