



**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, March 20, 2023, in the North Pole City Hall Chambers.

**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

Mayor Pro Tem Jacobson called the regular City Council meeting of Monday, March 20, 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

**Absent/Excused:**

Mayor Welch  
David Skipps

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

Led by Melissa Dionne

**INVOCATION**

Given by Mr. Keller

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Ms. Welch *moved to* unanimously approve the agenda of March 20, 2023

Seconded *by* Ms. Clack

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Ms. Welch *moved to* unanimously approve the minutes from the 3/6/2023 meeting

Seconded *by* Ms. Clack

**COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR**

- Mayor Pro Tem Jacobson read the Student of The Month Proclamation to Jayden Ferro.
- Howard Rixie, with the North Pole Community Chamber of Commerce, was with us to give an update on NPCCC.

**COUNCIL MEMBER QUESTIONS OF THE MAYOR**

- None

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

- Ani Soto was with us to introduce himself and to give the Council a little information about the new technology consulting firm that he just started called CTR Consultants.

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

#### Police Department, Chief Dutra

- Officer Bluhm is now off FTO and on his own.
- I am due to testify in front of the Interior Delegation tomorrow morning on both the range and the Policy Project for AACOP. I have 15 minutes to talk about both projects.
- Lt. is in Anchorage for some training.
- Successfully completed department wide active shooter training. Had fire department personnel joining us. Part of a longer endeavor.
- May 19th is Police Memorial Day starts at 11:00.
- Final push to complete speaker system in new and old parts of building.

#### Fire Department, Chief Heineken

- Captain Hamlin and I will be traveling to Appleton Wisconsin tomorrow to complete the mid-inspection on the new fire engine. All major components of the apparatus have been assembled, this inspection trip is to thoroughly examine the apparatus to ensure it is built to spec. With the photo updates they have been providing we already have some assurance everything is in order. I do not predict any major issues will be found, I am optimistic the apparatus will be ready for final inspection the last week of April.
- Beginning on January 1, 2022, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) requires selected ground ambulance organizations to collect and report cost, revenue, utilization, and other information through the Medicare Ground Ambulance Data Collection System (GADCS). North Pole ambulance was a selected ambulance service requiring us to report for 2022, failure to report would result in a 10% deduction in next year's billing. Assistant Chief Chambers has been working long and hard to gather the necessary data to complete the reporting process through the GADCS portal before the May 31st deadline. Chief Chambers with help from Michelle Peede and Tami Chiarell compiled all the necessary data. I would like to thank each of them for their dedication and hard work to this project.
- The fire department has started the process to use the State of Alaska Supplemental Emergency Medical Transport (SEMT) program. The SEMT program allows ambulance providers to submit annual reports that will result in reimbursed Medicaid supplemental payments. Much of the Data gathered during the CMS reporting will be of value to us when completing the SEMT reporting. Our ambulance billing company Systems Design recommended their partnering agency Public Consulting Group (PCG) to help us with the required set up and reporting for SEMT. PCG is the same company that we contracted with and provided templates for the CMS project. Chief Chambers and I met with a representative of PCG last

week to get us started on SEMT reporting. We should have predicted revenue and contractor cost estimates back before the next council meeting.

- The News Minor ran a nice article this morning about the plan for North Pole to donate Engine 24 later this year. I would like to make one clarification to the information within that article. The article stated I placed the replacement values of a new engine at 1.8 million, this figure was used out of context and was obtained from my comments during our last council meeting. At that meeting I talked about sending Ladder 21 to auction last summer and only receiving \$4200 for the retired aerial fire truck. For clarification 1.8 million was my estimate for purchasing a new aerial fire apparatus similar to our Platform 21. Our new engine was ordered a year and a half ago at a cost of \$866,278. Prices have gone up significantly since we ordered our engine, I estimate this same fire engine ordered today would be just over 1 million dollars but nowhere near 1.8 million. There is a vast difference in pricing between a fire engine/pumper and an aerial truck.

Mr. Jacobson asked if there was an open house planned at the fire department.

- Chief Heineken answered yes, one will be planned but they are going to change the date this year. Historically it was done the same day as the Cruisin with Santa event, but that event has gotten huge the last few years and feels like the department being able to respond to that event in case of an emergency was important. So they are going to have the open house sometime in July and the new engine will be here by then so they can showcase it at the open house.

#### Finance, Michelle Peede

- Ms. Fogarty shared that they have been working on closing up the 2022 year and preparing for the audit. They have been working with Altman and Rodgers in Anchorage. She said she feels like they are going to work very well together. She said they have brought her some ideas that are good ones, and they can start implementing them soon.
- She said that she will have financials next time, Ms. Peede is still working on them, so they were not done for tonight. They did get the statement from AMLJIA, where the city's investment is, in January the city moved an additional \$3 million dollars into that account. Previous to the move the interest per month was around \$4,000, with the additional money and a full month to look at, the interest was \$27,500. She said we moved that money at the right time, it was a good move.

Mr. Keller asked about the proposed pay raise for the police officers and if this was a financial move that could be supported at this time.

- Ms. Fogarty said yes, she has talked to Chief Dutra and this year can more than accommodate that raise. They have been down officers since the beginning of the year so the budget is fine right now and next year he would just have to work his budget around that new pay increase.

Ms. Welch asked about the other departments in the city and how we would address those employees not getting an additional wage increase also. She said that the city employees were just given a wage increase a few years ago.

- Ms. Fogarty said that other departments feeling slighted could become an issue, but the need right now for the city is filling the police department positions. She said across the state police departments are hurting and struggling to find officers and the wage increase is in response to that hiring crisis.

Mr. Jacobson asked if the Council would be receiving that police pay increase on the agenda soon.

- Chief Dutra said that he will be sending the information to the Council soon and will be seeking sponsors for it.

Mr. Jacobson along with Ms. Clack and Mr. Keller all agreed that they would like to sponsor that ordinance. He also asked Ms. Fogarty if there was an engagement letter for the audit in place yet.

- Ms. Fogarty replied that there was not one yet, although they have been working a bit on the audit already. She said that last year we did not get that letter until April. She said that based on last year's letter they know the things they need to start and they are working through that.

### **Director of City Services, Danny Wallace**

#### Special Topics

- OSHA Training
  - Today and tomorrow, we're doing OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration). This is a two-day course that includes attendees from throughout the City, to include Public Works, Utilities, and others (to include me). This is part of an ongoing effort to improve safety awareness and operations.

#### Building Department

- We had discussions with Benny Williams about the Santa Senior Center and provided information on previous inspections. They are working to address issues with heat loss and other maintenance issues. The City does not do maintenance on that building, but we will help with historical records and advice.
- We've had a few building inspections, to include the NP Plaza Pizza Hut project – that effort is on track, although they will not be ready for a few weeks.

#### Public Works Department

- City Staffing: [show the staffing slide and explain] – You'll see information on our Public Works staffing efforts. This will ensure that we keep ahead of consistently evolving City Requirements and will allow for better coverage to meet City and citizen needs.
- We're currently soliciting bids for street sweeping after spring breakup (to remove the sand/gravel from our City roads). I have reached out via email to prospective commercial and government candidates, and this is being advertised in the NewsMiner. Last year, we paid \$18,400 for a one-time removal. Bids are due on March 31.
- We're beginning work on the summer projects list. Many of those are shown on our slide.
- The police department continues to have problems with the NPPD annex – to include the sewer line and problems with heating that space. Rod Stanton (builder) committed to fix all of the issues beginning this spring.
- We continue to push snow away from the roads throughout City in anticipation of future snow falls. Things continue to go well, and the weather continues to cooperate.

- We are ready to begin working with Respec (an engineering firm) on the Drainage Survey. They plan to begin this in the next few weeks (pending Council acceptance of the \$46k grant). We anticipate feedback and planning information by mid-summer 2023.
- Cody Lougee (our PW supervisor) returned from a well-deserved break.

#### Utility Department

- Utilities operations continue to go well, and they are seeing typical events for this time of the year.  
Customer comment on Water Utilities
  - Melanie Swanson received this comment last week on assistance Paul Trissel and the Water Utilities crew provided when a water leak was detected: “I would like to pass on my appreciation to the water crew who came out yesterday to help with the water leak. Had they not shut off the water to the unit, the water would still be flowing into my home because the contractor who contacted me today said the earliest they could look at it would be Monday! Please let them and their supervisor know how much we appreciate their help. The information they had about where the shut off was located and how it worked was invaluable as even the HOA president was not aware of the location for the shut off for the building. We also appreciate your help in contacting the unit owner to gain access to the shut off. Again, many thanks to the whole crew. It really made me feel like North Pole is a great small town. A-plus on customer service, too.”
- The citizen feedback about is typical of the feedback they receive for support provided to the City.
- Sewer Deficit Working Group (show and explain slide): Bottom line is that we met several times throughout the last couple of months and took a hard look at options to address this issue. Our recommendation is to delay any action until the next budget cycle.
- Milepost 351 overpass work continues, which includes moving the water main line to support construction of the new overpass over the next couple of years. We are working with DOT to provide oversight on the effort.

Ms. Welch asked about the sewer deficit funds and the idea of combining the water and sewer utilities together.

- Mr. Wallace agreed that combining the water and sewer budgets would be problematic because not all of the water customers are also sewer customers.

Ms. Welch asked Mr. Wallace if the snow removal through the roundabouts could not happen during the morning rush hour traffic. Having those large trucks created a gridlock this morning and it was very inconvenient.

- Mr. Wallace agreed that those hours are an issue, this year DOT has been in good communication with the city, this morning however they did not let us know that they would be in the area. Mr. Wallace said that he did let them know that those hours are not ideal and asked them to not work in the city during that morning commute.

### Human Resources, Ellen Glab

- Ms. Glab is out on maternity leave.

### Borough Representative

Borough meeting 3/9/2023

- Mr. Keller attended this meeting.
- He said that there was a full house that night at the borough assembly meeting, with residents there to talk about the Mahn Cho mine project and the ore trucks on the road. There were Kinross reps in attendance and they were able to give their testimonies. He said that the idea of not having the vote on the resolution that night was discussed, but he let them know that he didn't feel like it was a good idea and that the vote was a long time coming already. The resolution to not support the project was voted in.
- He gave an update about the taxes in the City and if they had been raised. He said there was a lot of incorrect info out there, so he set it straight.
- Mr. Keller said one thing that he really liked was that the chair, each time someone new was up to testify, reminded the Assembly to be 'courteous and not contentious' to the person testifying. He said he really liked that phrase and feels like we should adopt something similar. He said he feels like this is a good reminder to everyone.
- He said that being at the meeting was a good learning experience, but that he didn't get home till 1am because he wanted to stay to the end. And that he is grateful that our meeting does not last that long.

Mr. Jacobson let everyone know that the Resolution on the Kinross Mahn Cho mine project is going to be back up for consideration by the assembly at the request of one of the assembly members this Thursday night.

- Mr. Keller let the Council know to remember when they are the rep for the City that they are able to comment on items on the agenda that have an impact on the city or items that we have already passed a resolution/ordinance on.

### City Clerk's Office, Melissa Dionne

- Ms. Dionne gave an update on the new city website; it is done and in the final quality assurance portion of the process. This portion should take no more than a week or two, at the end of that we will have the links to the new site and set up training on how to use it. She said after looking at it and seeing how much updating needs to happen she will make the call whether or not to work on updates first before rolling out the site to the public. She said that she wants to make sure that the product that we put out to the public is the best that we can make it.
- Today and tomorrow she is attending an OSHA training with the PW and Utility staff. She said that this is not a training that she would normally have in her wheelhouse, but that safety is safety and the more awareness we have in the city the better.
- She thanked the Council for submitting their APOC fillings in on time this year.

Mr. Keller asked about new website and if we would be the ones doing that updating of it was a 3<sup>rd</sup> party.

- Ms. Dionne said no that it was us and when the training is scheduled that she is going to get everyone involved. Ideally there will be at least one person from every department there. She said that she would like everyone to have the ability to go in and change there own information. She said that she doesn't

want that responsibility and that she wants to make sure that she is not the only one with the knowledge to navigate the site and update, she wants everyone to have it.

Mr. Cromer asked Ms. Dionne if she had gotten enough pictures for the site from people.

- Ms. Dionne said that no she would love to have more pictures and asked everyone if they do have any pictures from around the city to please send them her way.

## **ON GOING PROJECTS**

- None

## **Unfinished Business**

- Ordinance 23-04, An Ordinance of the City of North Pole Amending the Harassment Policy for the City of North Pole Employees

Ms. Clack *moved* to Amend the Ordinance to change section J

Seconded *by* Ms. Welch

## **On the Ordinance as Amended**

### **DISCUSSION**

None

### **PASSED**

Yes: 5 – A. Welch, Clack, Jacobson, Cromer, Keller

No: 0

Absent: 2 – Mayor Welch, Skippis

Ms. Welch *moved* to Approve the Ordinance

Seconded *by* Mr. Jacobson

## **On the Ordinance**

### **DISCUSSION**

None

### **PASSED**

Yes: 5 – A. Welch, Clack, Jacobson, Cromer, Keller

No: 0

Absent: 2 – Mayor Welch, Skippis

## **New Business**

- Resolution 23-05, A Resolution of the North Pole City Council to Donate Engine 24

Ms. Welch *moved* to approve the Resolution

Seconded *by* Ms. Clack

## **On the Resolution**

## DISCUSSION

None

## PASSED

Yes: 5 – A. Welch, Clack, Jacobson, Cromer, Keller

No: 0

Absent: 2 – Mayor Welch, Skipps

\* The Council Member present asked that their name be added supporting this resolution.

- NPDF Request to Accept Grant Funds

Mr. Keller *moved* to approve the request

Seconded *by* Ms. Welch

## On the Request

### DISCUSSION

None

### PASSED

Yes: 5 – A. Welch, Clack, Jacobson, Cromer, Keller

No: 0

Absent: 2 – Mayor Welch, Skipps

\* Mayor Welch joined the meeting at 9:00 P.M.

- Request to Transition Public Works Part-Time Position to Full-Time

Ms. Welch *moved* to approve the request

Seconded *by* Ms. Clack

## On the Request

### DISCUSSION

None

### PASSED

Yes: 6 – A. Welch, Clack, Jacobson, Cromer, Keller, Welch

No: 0

Absent: 1 – Skipps

- NPCA Request to Accept Drainage Survey Grant

Ms. Welch *moved* to approve the request

Seconded *by* Mr. Keller

## On the Request



## DISCUSSION

None

## PASSED

Yes: 5 – A. Welch, Clack, Jacobson, Cromer, Keller, Welch

No: 0

Absent: 1 - Skipps

## COUNCIL COMMENTS

- Ms. Welch said that she is looking forward to moving the ton of snow that came off her roof at home, she said that she considers herself blessed that she and the dogs had just missed the snow when it came down. She warned everyone about watching their pets and children this time of year. The snow was hardpack and heavy and there might not be enough time to recuse anyone trapped under it.
- Ms. Clack thanked everyone for their hard work on the harassment and bullying policy and asked everyone to have a good evening.
- Mr. Keller said that he is grateful that it is not 1am and we are still here. He said that he is extremely elated to welcome the spring weather, the beautiful sunshine and warmer air is definitely welcomed. He did caution everyone about the slick roads that will be thawing during the day and then freezing at night. He said that he hopes we can all use the spring to rejuvenate ourselves and also to look around the community to see if there is anyone who could use our help.
- Mr. Cromer thanked everyone for clarifying some things for him tonight about the ordinance on the agenda and wished everyone a happy spring and Easter. He said he is looking forward to taking his daughter easter egg hunting this year.
- Mr. Jacobson thanked everyone for a good meeting tonight, he welcomed the mayor to the meeting and said that he can't wait to hear from him during his comments. He let everyone know that he passed out an article about the working age population has declined, that the people in the prime of their working age are laving the state and that is putting a lot of pressure on the older population that is staying here. He said that North Pole has a lot to offer and that we need to work with our economic development and housing committee to make North Pole stand out so that we can keep good people here and make them want to stay. He said that because we do not have large attractions here, we need to use our community events as a way to make people feel not so lonely. As Council members that is something that we should be asking our neighbors and residents, what are things that would help them, that they would want to see here. He is the representative for the next borough assembly meeting this Thursday. He said that he will be contributing to the discussion on the Mahn Cho ore trucking proposal, he also said that he will be thanking them for the Wescott pool upgrades. He shared the details of the Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce luncheon tomorrow at Wedgewood, they will be hosting the CEO of the parent company that owns Kinross Alaska.
- The Mayor thanks Mr. Jacobson for standing in for him tonight as chair. He was with reps from the City of Fairbanks and the borough and the military talking about housing in the area and the upcoming needs in the community. New housing will be coming in 2028 when Birchwood homes is dedeed back to the Army for additional military housing. The army rep let everyone know that the army presence here will not be getting any smaller in the future. There will be additional dorm spaces and housing available at EAFB soon,

but there will be immediate need for over the next 3 years, about 360 homes. Over 500 families have made the transition to the area in the immediate past. The KC-135's will be coming (270 personnel) soon and they will need 280 units over the next 4 building seasons. He will be meeting with a representative from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development to talk housing tomorrow. There is a chance at funding for some of the things that we need as far as housing from that department. He said that he is happy that Spring is here and thanked the Council for their remarks tonight.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

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

Seconded *by* Mr. Keller

The regular meeting of Monday, March 20, 2023, adjourned at 9:16 p.m.

**These minutes passed and approved** by a duly constituted quorum of the North Pole City Council on Monday, March 20, 2023.

**ATTEST:**

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Melissa Dionne, City Clerk