



**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 3, 2023, in the North Pole City Hall Chambers.

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Mayor Welch called the regular City Council meeting of Monday, April 3, 2023, to order at 7:00 p.m.

Present:

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

Absent/Excused:

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE U.S. FLAG

Led by Melissa Dionne

INVOCATION

Given by Mr. Welch

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Ms. Welch *moved* to approve the agenda of April 3, 2023

Seconded *by* Mr. Jacobson

Ms. Welch *moved* to amend the agenda of April 3, 2023, to consent the following items:

New Business

- b. Ordinance 23-06, An Ordinance of the City of North Pole Amending the 2023 Budget to Accept Grant Funds

Seconded *by* Ms. Clack

On the Amendment

DISCUSSION

None

PASSED

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

No: 0

Absent: 0

On the Agenda as Amended

DISCUSSION

None

PASSED

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

No: 0

Absent: 0

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Jacobson *moved* to approve the minutes from the 3/20/2023 meeting

Seconded *by* Ms. Welch

On the Minutes

DISCUSSION

None

PASSED

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

No: 0

Absent: 0

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR

- The Mayor passed out a flyer to the Council, it details the Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center as well as the Regaining Arctic Capability plans from the military. Last week he was with the local military forces as well as military from 11 other countries in an arctic exercise. He shared some details about his experience with them.
- On March 28 he was with Randy Hobbs and city attorney Zane Wilson to talk about the combined heat and power utility for the city. Mr. Wilson wants to model it after the IGU. They are considering going to Aurora Energy to contract with them to run the utility. They also met with GVEA on a nondisclosure agreement. There will be more about this later in the year. Mr. Wilson is working on a contract with Marathon Oil that will be voted on by the Council in the next few months.
- Hank Bartos will be coming to the Council at the next meeting asking for support for a Veterans cemetery here in the Interior out in Salcha.

COUNCIL MEMBER QUESTIONS OF THE MAYOR

- Mr. Jacobson asked for clarification on the location of the Veterans cemetery.

The Mayor said that he would leave the details for Mr. Bartos to share, but there have been a few pieces of land in the area identified and for one reason or another they had not worked out. Now the piece of land they are planning for is in Salcha.

- Mr. Cromer asked about the combined heat and power and how that would run.

The Mayor said that it is recommended that there is a board. But there is at least another's years worth of work to be done before we get there.

- Mr. Cromer asked the Mayor to explain how things get onto the agenda for the Council to consider and if there are things that don't make it to the Council.

The Mayor explained that there is a staff meeting, with himself and the department heads, and each can bring forward things they would like on the agenda. We discuss them at that staff meeting and consider if they are ready for the Council or if they need more information before being presented. He said that if something does not make it to the Council it would be because it wasn't ready yet.

- Ms. Clack asked about the contract that Mr. Wilson is working on with Marathon Oil and when the Council would be seeing that.

The Mayor said that that contract is not ready yet but as soon as it is Mr. Wilson will come to the Council and explain it on the night that the Council will be voting on it.

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

- None

COMMUNICATIONS FROM DEPARTMENT HEADS, BOROUGH REPRESENTATIVE AND THE CITY CLERK

Police Department, Chief Dutra

- I attended my second confirmation hearing today in front of Senate Judiciary.
- Lt. Smith along with Homer PD Lieutenant had a parents education meeting at NPHS on Friday night.
- Stanton is working on fixing the sheetrock cracks in the meeting room.
- Rep. Prax called me to tell me there is likely no chance the policy project will get funded.
- I have been asked by APOA Statewide board to attend a state board meeting, all expense paid to Anchorage to present the range project to the board, the first of May.
- We are preparing for Police Memorial Day at the Trooper Gabe Rich and Trooper Scott Johnson Memorial Park on May 19th at 11:00. Lunch will follow at NPPD.
- Lt. Smith is in Anchorage for leadership training again. LEMI is a very valuable leadership course.

The Mayor asked about the job openings with the department and if Chief has had any movement.

- Chief Dutra said that they have someone in the early stages for the detective position, but nothing so far for the Chena Lakes position.

Mr. Jacobson asked about the 'policy project' that he mentioned.

- Chief said that it is an Alaska Association of Police project. It is an effort to have a statewide police policy manual in every city and village in the state of Alaska. It is a manual that gets updated often depending on the area. This project is expensive and takes a lot of effort. It is going to take approximately \$550,000 to seed this program. He said that he would be happy to give the Council more information on this topic.
- Chief Dutra relayed some info to the Council about the accreditation process that his department is working towards and will be going through soon.

Ms. Welch asked about the Council getting an abbreviated ALICE training course.

- Chief Dutra said that he would be happy to give one to the Council.

Fire Department, Chief Heineken

- The trip to the factory and the inspection of the new fire engine went well. The truck should be done the first week in May and he will be returning to do a final inspection before it starts to make its way to us. They do have contractors that will be driving it across the states to put it on a barge in Washington to head here.
- He has gotten a lot of feedback on the engine that will be given away by the department/city. He feels like there will be a good bunch of organizations to choose from.

Ms. Welch volunteered to be on the engine donation committee.

- Chief Heineken said that they should start working on putting that committee together in May to meeting in June/July to make that decision.

Finance, Tricia Fogarty

- Ms. Fogarty shared that she sent out financials on Friday and reminded everyone if they have any questions to feel free to ask her.
- They are gearing up and starting work on the audit. They had a few calls last week with their advisors. They are trying to get in touch with Alliance, but they have not responded yet and there is no letter of engagement with them yet either.
- They have a few more weeks to wrap up the 2022 books, after they are submitted, they can no longer go back and change anything.

The Mayor asked if things were working out with Altman and Rodgers.

- Ms. Fogarty said yes, they have had a lot of good conversations with them, and they have been very helpful.

Ms. Welch asked if not having the committal letter from Alliance has changed anything?

- Ms. Fogarty replied no that nothings has changed. They are still actively working on the audit, they know from past experience what they need to do.

Director of City Services, Danny Wallace

Special Topics

- Moose Creek
 - We continue to work on Moose Creek requirements; this week, they began installing new antennas on water systems to address communications problems. Respec is doing the work for those
 - We're also working on validating our reporting procedures with the Corps of Engineers. We're doing this in anticipation of continued payments to both HC and Respec
 - Ground work to address outstanding grading and hydroseeding issues will resume in May/June
 - The project end date is currently June 30th, although there might be administrative (AF-level review) issues that require an extension.
- Summer Hires

- We advertised all three positions today via contact and social media. We are not planning to pay for advertising. Closing date for these is April 19th and we anticipate a decision prior to 1 May.
- NW Manager's Conference
 - Email sent (refer to that). I was fortunate to participate in the NW Manager's Conference (sponsored by the Alaska Municipal Management Association) held here in Fairbanks this week. This organization provided a venue for communities to discuss municipal challenges in the Arctic and Pacific Northwest. The Alaska Municipal League helped host the conference, along with Jim Williams, FNSB Chief of Staff (de facto City Manager for FNSB). The conference also included attendees from Oregon, Washington, and the International City/County Manager's Association (ICMA), which provided a broad spectrum of experience and useful discussion.

Building Department

- We continue to work with the Wescott Pool project manager on building permit requirements. Today they returned the assessment worksheet and we're determining the permit requirements and costs.

Public Works Department

- We received only one bid for the Street Sweeping project, but we feel it will be sufficient. I'll present that information at the next Council Meeting.
- We're beginning work on the summer projects list. We have an internal meeting to review those on April 12th.
- 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..

Utility Department

- Utilities operations continue to go well and they are seeing typical events for this time of the year.

Ms. Welch asked about the water meters and who pays for that.

- Mr. Wallace said that the cost is rolled into the rate, but that there is a small fee for the upkeep on the new meters.

Mr. Jacobson asked about the pay for the summer hire positions.

- Mr. Wallace said it is the same as last year, \$20 an hour for both the summer hires and the intern. The position is a 12 week one and the dates of start and stop can be flexible based on school dates.

Human Resources, Ellen Glab

- Ms. Glab is out on maternity leave.

Borough Representative

Borough meeting 3/23/2023

- Mr. Jacobson attended this meeting.
- He thanked the borough assembly for the improvements on the Westcott pool.

- He also encouraged them to continue funding the grants to help people convert to natural gas to help with the air quality in the area.
- He shared that the NP council had passed the resolution not supporting the Mahn Cho Mine project.
- There were some assembly members who had expressed concern with the PFOS groundwater contamination in the NP area. Mr. Jacobson was able to give them some info on the direction that the PFOS travels.
- Most of the talks in the meeting were centered around the Mahn Cho min project. He said that they did finally pass something but that the outcome was very disheartening, and he felt that there was a lack of leadership.
- Mr. Jacobson also gave a rundown of the city's presentation at the NPCCC luncheon. Each of the department heads talked about their departments and he shared information about the Council and talked about some of the long-term challenges the city is facing along with the housing needs of the area. During this lunch he did get a question about why the city contracts out the snow removal instead of doing it ourselves. Mr. Jacobson explained to her that the idea of having all of that snow removal equipment plus operators to drive the equipment is a very expensive one and is something that the city cannot afford to do at this time.

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 that she would keep everyone updated.
- She let the Council know that she left a copy of the new bullying and harassment policy at their seat and asked them to please sign the acknowledgment and get it back to her. She also reminded the department heads that she needed them back as soon as possible.

The Mayor asked when the clerks training is this year.

- Ms. Dionne let him know that it was the 2nd week in June and that she would not be missing any meetings, only the staff meeting prior. She also said that she is looking into a PIO certificate program and would get the Council that info.

ON GOING PROJECTS

- Ms. Welch and Ms. Clack attended the grand opening of Timber Creek, a new retirement home in Fairbanks this last weekend. Ms. Welch said that it was a very well-thought-out community, with many amenities. Ms. Clack agreed she said that the facility was very nice, the staff was very friendly, and the amenities were lovely.
- The Mayor shared that on May 22 through the 25th is the Governors Sustainable Energy conference in Anchorage. More info can be found at alaskasustainableenergy.com.

NEW BUSINESS

- Ordinance 23-05, An Ordinance of the City of North Pole Amending the Pay Scale for City of North Pole Police Department Employees

Mr. Jacobson *moved* to approve the Ordinance

Seconded *by* Ms. Clack

On the Ordinance

DISCUSSION

None

PASSED

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

No: 0

Absent:

* Council Member Skipps asked to be added as a sponsor of this ordinance.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

- Ms. Welch said that she has been enjoying some of the things going on in the community. She said that she recently had a conversation with someone from the University who does a lot of stuff with climate change. She shared some details about the combined heat and power plant and she said that he was pretty excited about that. He invited the Council to come up to the University to check out some of the projects that they are working on.
- Mr. Skipps thanked the police department and Chief Dutra for their professionalism. His son was recently pulled over by Officer Blum and what could have been a bad situation was handled very nicely and professionally by the officer. He asked Chief Dutra to extend that thank you to Officer Blum.
- Ms. Clack thanked everyone for their hard work toward the police pay increase and the seriousness of the city's needs for employees.
- Mr. Keller recently attended the parental education talking point that a Lieutenant from Homer gave. He said that he is excited that Lt. Smith will also be offering this training. He said that one statistic that came from this training that he would like to share was that 1/3 of high school girls have had thoughts/ideations of committing suicide. He said that it really hit home with him because he has 4 girls. He said his thought was holy crap what can I do to keep my girls safe? He said it comes to parenting. Having a relationship with your kids in your home so that they know they can come and talk to you and to not be scared. He said that he and his wife need to work on their reactions, that the reason kids don't want to talk to their parents is because of the parents' reaction to what they share, so their kids can feel better about talking to them. He said that he has a lot of contact with youth and adolescents and even people into their 20's who have those struggles with their self-doubt and their self-worth and that it is almost a pandemic, this thinking. He said that we need to shed light on this, that we need to open our minds and be an asset. On the phone 988 is the hotline that people can call to talk to someone, and the Fairbanks area has an emergency response mental health task force that locals can call. He said that there were not a lot of people in attendance at this talk, but the ones that were there had a great response to it. He said that knowledge is power, especially when we apply it and he said that this is something that he is taking back to his home and to his community because this number is just too high. He said that he is grateful for the warming weather and cannot wait to smell the BBQ. He asked everyone to continue to be safe on the

roads, they are slick with all the warming and freezing.

- Mr. Cromer thanked the Council for passing the new bullying and harassment policy last time we met. And asked the city employees to please come forward if they are feeling harassed or bullied. To please go to HR, no matter how big or small it is. It is important to the city to have that safe environment to work in.
- Mr. Jacobson reminded the Council to sign the acknowledgement of that policy and to return it to the Clerk. He said that it is important to lead by example and get that signed. He said that there are some exciting things happening in the community. The Polaris building in Fairbanks that has been abandoned for years will be torn down starting the second week in April. The initial tear down of the annex will be completed in mid-May. They will use that empty lot this summer as a location for outdoor events, food truck rallies or pop-up businesses. The rest of the building will come down in September. He shared some funny April Fools Day jokes that were going around about things in Fairbanks, like adding the debris from the Polaris building to the Chena river to make rapids in the water. He let everyone know that he has calendar packets for the Council that include the school calendar along a few other ones for their reference. Mr. Jacobson also gave a welcome to Mr. Keller's daughter who was in attendance tonight.
- The Mayor talked about the 11th airborne, and shared some things that he had learned about them. He said that they have a really rich history, while the flag was being raised over Iwo Jima, the 11th airborne was freeing the Philippines. He got to listen the 4-star general of PACAF had to say about the to the 3 things that Chinese have right now that we could do something about one of them. He said that they have interior lines, that to the North, South, East and West of them they have allies. He said in that regard we could do something about that, new countries are being brought into NATO, like Finland and Sweden, he said that we have people in the Pacific and here in the Arctic giving us the Interior line. But 2 things we don't have is that the Chinese have 400 million people in their upper middle class, that is more people than we have in the US the other is weaponry, including everything from aircraft to bullets. His big take away was that the US has to do better with less people, and we have to have better equipment because we just don't have as much. He said that the military here is growing and expanding, EAFB and Wainwright are both growing. As we grow we need to keep our eyes open on how we grow and how we do it best.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Clack *moved* to adjourn

Seconded *by* Ms. Clack

The regular meeting of Monday, April 3, 2023, adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

These minutes passed and approved by a duly constituted quorum of the North Pole City Council on Monday, April 3, 2023.

ATTEST:

Melissa Dionne, City Clerk