



**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, May 15, 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, May 15, 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 – Via Zoom
Aino Welch

Absent/Excused:

Mayor Welch
David Skipps

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE U.S. FLAG

Led by Melissa Dionne

INVOCATION

Given by Ms. Welch

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Keller *moved* to approve the agenda of May 15, 2023

Seconded *by* Ms. Welch

On the Agenda

DISCUSSION

None

PASSED

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

No: 0

Absent: 1 – Skipps, Mayor Welch

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Welch *moved* to unanimously approve the minutes from the 5/1/2023 meeting

Seconded *by* Mr. Keller

On the Minutes

DISCUSSION

None

PASSED

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

No: 0

Absent: 1 – Skipps, Mayor Welch

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR

- None

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

- Chief Dutra was not with us tonight.

Fire Department, Chief Heineken

- The final inspection on the new fire engine went very well. The small list of discrepancies we made were all minor, the factory had them remedied quickly and the engine began its trip across country to Hughes Fire Equipment in Springfield Oregon last week and arrived today. From Oregon it will be sent to Anchorage by Barge and then driven to North Pole. We expect it to arrive sometime in early to mid-June.
- The fire department currently has one firefighter position vacant, a conditional offer has been made to fill the position and we are awaiting completion of their firefighter physical. We also have had another one of our firefighters inform us that she has received a conditional job offer from a department in her home state and upon her receiving a confirmed start date she will be leaving us in the coming months.
- Chief Chambers and I met with School District CTE (career technical education) staff on May 9th. Both organizations had previously talked about developing an emergency service tract for high school students back in 2019. Our progress was interrupted by the pandemic, the meeting last week was to revive our earlier progress. We look forward to this partnership with our local school, the end goal is to have a functional program that will provide a route for high school students to receive education and training during their Junior and Senior years and upon graduation place them into local apprenticeships, scholarships, and student firefighting positions within the Fairbanks Borough.

- Reminder, the Fire Department open house is not this coming weekend as tradition. This year's open house has been scheduled for July 29th.

Mr. Jacobson asked about letting the public know about fire/burn permits going into the fire season.

- Chief Heineken answered that the department does a lot of outreach via social media. They also get a lot of calls at the station. We are currently in the 'brown up' season, before everything starts budding, so this is the time to start thinking about permits and being fire wise.

Mr. Jacobson suggested that we touch base with the NPCCC about putting a message on the board at the NP Plaza about it. He also asked Chief more information about the fire department turn over and the idea that people join here to get on with a department and get some training and then they leave within a short amount of time and what that timeline is.

- Chief Heineken said that the last one to leave did so in a short amount of time due to her family circumstances changing, but normally about 2 years seems to be the average. He said that he would really like to see more employees reaching that 5-year mark. But it seems that in the last 10 years most have left well before the 5-year mark. He said that is the problem with recruiting from out of state, also one of the problems with working for a small department is that the progression up the ranks is slower which causes people to look outside for that career progression.

Mr. Jacobson asked the Chief to put together some ideas on retention for his department to bring to the Council.

Ms. Clack asked about the committee for the fire engine donation that the Chief is putting together.

- The Chief said that he will be notifying committee members before the next meeting, so that is in the works. The application deadline is June 20th, and he wants the committee to get together before the end of June.

Finance, Tricia Fogarty

- Ms. Fogarty shared that she and her staff were gone most of last week at a Tyler conference to get some additional training. She and Michelle Peede did payroll remotely while in Texas, they ran into a few issues, but it was processed successfully and on time. The Tyler training was very good, they made some good contacts.
- They went live with Tyler payments, only 1 of the 3 is working. They found a work around for while they were gone, but they are still working on a permanent fix.
- We are at the finish line with Tyler, the newest project manager, on leave, so they are without a project manager again. They do have a new contact person that they are trying to meet with.
- The audit is in the works, the schedules are set. They have some clean up to do with the A/R and the conversion. They are trying to talk to a general ledger person at Tyler for some changes that need to happen.

Director of City Services, Danny Wallace

Special Topics

- Summer Hires

- Our summer intern, Owen Luo, arrived last Monday and has already been busy with training, filing and assisted with flood mitigation survey work. Our public works summer hires, Derick Johnson and Tina Raman, began work today (Monday, May 15). Tom Blair is working to in process and get them on board. They'll be an essential part of keeping the City maintained and beautiful this summer.
- Grant and Congressionally Directed Spending Submissions
 - We're still awaiting word from the Department of Energy on the Grant Submission for the Combined Heat and Power Plant; additionally, no word yet from the Denali Commission on the sewer outfall application (we asked that they fund our current analysis and design effort)
 - We've received a proposal from
 - Additionally, we still have three CDS requests through Sen Murkowski's office (City Water Main, Utilities Lines of Distribution, Sewer Outfall) pending. We do not expect to hear back on those until the federal budget is passed (late 2023).
- Combined Heat and Power Plant
 - In your packets, you'll see an information sheet and our initial submission for grant support for this project.
 - Respec Engineering has offered to do the initial project planning for this (required if we're approved for the next stage of the DOE grant). We would have to have this by the end of June. We're asking the City to spend \$20,000 on Respec's initial plan for the \$80M project.
 - The bottom line is that this project addresses needs for both North Pole and the Interior to include low-cost power and heat, reduced emissions, and food security. I can answer questions about the project if needed.

Building Department

- We met with representatives from IGU on the adjustments to natural gas installation oversight. They understand the new process (aligned with other organizations in the Interior) and are prepared to comply. We've received excellent support from our inspector, Charlie Jeannet, for this effort.

Public Works Department

- Street sweepers (Groundhogs LLC) were out today getting after the winter gravel – we'll check the progress tomorrow. They've been responsive and on time (we're expecting quality work).
- Public works folks are helping clean up and plant flowers at Memorial Park in anticipation of the Ceremony on Saturday.

Utility Department

- In Moose Creek, water meter antenna replacement continues (these are being replaced due to communications issues). As of last week, 138 of 209 antennas have been replaced. No major issues thus far, everyone that has made an appointment has been friendly and polite while we were onsite. Their biggest challenge is going to be getting the residents who haven't responded yet to allow access.

- The project has been extended through October 30th, 2023 to ensure all construction activities and documentation is completed. This isn't an issue for the City.

Mr. Cromer asked if there was an update on 3 Bears coming to North Pole.

- MR. Wallace said that after a recent meeting he feels like they are still on trajectory to open later this year. They have been in contact with the borough to talk about building requirements, etc.

Mr. Jacobson asked Mr. Wallace to look into the ACS building off Santa Claus Lane. It was damaged years ago and never repaired.

Human Resources, Ellen Glab

- Ms. Glab let everyone know that she recently pushed out the harassment and diversity training. She was having issues with the harassment training, but as soon as that is fixed, she will get that one out. She asked if anyone had a different email address that they would like the training sent to, to please get her that address.

Borough Representative

The Borough meeting 5/11 the representative was Ms. Welch

- There was a resolution up for vote that was an agreement between the City of North Pole, the City of Fairbanks, and the borough to provide jointly for economic development. This agreement was a formality covering partnership that the cities and borough have always had.
- Most of this meeting was set aside for public testimony about the borough budget.
- Ms. Welch also shared that she had spoken to an assembly member who apologized to her about the previous meeting when Ms. Welch was shut down from speaking at the meeting. She said that it was unexpected and nice to hear.

City Clerk's Office, Melissa Dionne

- Ms. Dionne let everyone know that she just finished a RUBA training, it was a 32-hour training and she feels like she got a lot out of it.
- Ms. Dionne let everyone know that the website is just about ready to go, she is giving the departments time to update their pages before going live.

Ms. Welch asked about the phone issues that City Hall has been having and if they were being investigated.

- Ms. Dionne apologized and said that she did not realize we were having issues but that she would be happy to investigate it.

ON GOING PROJECTS

- Mr. Wallace gave the Council an update on the combined heat and power plant that the city is working towards. More information was given in the packet for this meeting. There is a proposal from Respec on doing a scoping project on the site. Mr. Wallace said that he can come to the Council at the next meeting with additional information and a fiscal note.

Mr. Jacobson said that he is very supportive of this project, he just wants to make sure that we are being very transparent about the information and where the funds for the scoping project were coming from.

Mr. Keller asked if moving forward the Council could be kept up with the new information regarding the combined heat and power. He said that it is a big project and up until now they have not been given much information about it, he asked if there could be at least email updates to the Council when new developments occur.

- Mr. Wallace agreed that that would be doable and that he would make sure that the Council stayed updated.

Mr. Jacobson asked if it was appropriate that adding the plan and some details to the website would be nice as well.

- Mr. Wallace also talked about the update to the 2016 Strategic Plan by Agnew Beck. The City is working on many grants that having this plan updated to be able to submit it with grant applications is important. The cost will be about \$5000 to review the progress on the plan from 2016-2021 and to suggest a way forward.

Mr. Jacobson asked if the 2016-2021 plan could be sent to the Council so that they have it to review.

NEW BUSINESS

- Meritain Renewal Decision Points

Ms. Johnson walked the Council through the decision points line by line, and the decisions were made at each point. Mr. Jacobson thanked Aimee Johnson of RISQ consulting for being with us tonight.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

- Ms. Welch reminded everyone to think about what is going on out there. School is just about out, there will be a lot of youngsters running free in the community. She said that she is asking everyone to be the village, if you see something that isn't right to say something. It doesn't have to be the "Karen" doing it, it can be done nicely to get them in the right direction. She said that she heard some comments that the NP police department had a nice blurb on their Facebook about the rules regarding 4 wheelers on the roads. She said that there were people that were upset on the post and that she doesn't understand why. There are rules in place to make sure that we are safe and we have given them permission, as long as they follow the rules of having a drivers license and have insurance, etc. She said that she still sees people driving on the side of the road, she thinks that what people didn't understand is that when you are out there and you encounter a police officer that it makes a lot of difference whether you go "I am not going to listen to you and saying that this is a bunch of BS because I should be allowed to do this". Instead, you do it nicely and most likely if you are following other common-sense rules you will not get a ticket. You might be told this is not the place to do it or something like that. They are trying to educate our young driver's especially, but also some of the adults out there. Please be safe out there, follow the rules of the road and we can avoid any serious issues.
- Mr. Keller echoed Councilwoman Welch's thoughts about the ATV's. He said that it is exciting about the warmer weather, but the increase of risk is also out there with those vehicles, even with them properly being ridden and on the road, it is scary. Seeing youth riding them almost carelessly, my caution is for the adults to step up and to train and to educate and for the youth to watch out. He said that he does not really believe in coincidences and recently Fairbanks lost a youth in an ATV accident. And that is one too many. As a city we passed an ordinance allowing the recreational vehicles on the roads and yet we are getting hounded by complaints of why they are getting tickets or why are they getting pulled over. Well if

you did that anywhere else, even places in Alaska, it would be more of an issue. He would like to applaud that police force here in trying to educate and for putting their best foot forward. He laughed and said it is like beating a dead horse sometimes, trying to educate, trying to educate. With the warmer weather and the excitement please continue to look out for your neighbors and be safe with the upcoming hunting a fishing season.

- Mr. Jacobson thanked everyone for their participation tonight, especially the employees who love to spend their Monday evenings with us. He knows that it makes for a very long day, and he thanks them for that. Just a reminder and invite to the police memorial ceremony on Friday at 11am at the memorial park on Dougchee. In honor of those that have passed he asked that everyone have a wonderful and safe Memorial Day weekend coming up in a couple of weeks.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Welch *moved* to adjourn

Seconded *by* Mr. Cromer

The regular meeting of Monday, May 15, 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, May 15, 2023.

ATTEST:

Melissa Dionne, City Clerk