



**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, July 24, 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, July 24, 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
David Skipps
Chandra Clack
Aino Welch

Absent/Excused:

Mayor Welch

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE U.S. FLAG

Led by Melissa Dionne

INVOCATION

Given by Mr. Skipps

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Keller *moved* to approve the agenda of July 24, 2023

Seconded *by* Ms. Clack

On the Agenda

DISCUSSION

None

PASSED

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

No: 0

Absent: 1 - Mayor Welch

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Welch *moved* to approve the minutes from the 7/10/2023 meeting

Seconded *by* Ms. Clack

On the Minutes

DISCUSSION

None

PASSED

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

No: 0

Absent: 1 - Mayor Welch

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR

- Garry Hutchison from Alliance CPAs was with us tonight to present the City of North Pole's 2022 Audit.

COUNCIL MEMBER QUESTIONS OF THE MAYOR

- None

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

- Howard Rixie with NPCCC joined us to speak about the 'You Are Not Alone' wall that will be built in the Terry Miller Memorial Park here in North Pole.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM DEPARTMENT HEADS, BOROUGH REPRESENTATIVE AND THE CITY CLERK

Police Department, Chief Dutra

- Our two new officers are off to the academy. Days one and two under the belt.
 - Our other 2 new hires are off and running. Det. Cash is off FTO and already running hard with several big cases and following up on many open cases. SO glad that he is on it.
 - Sgt Templin is learning fast and catching up on the new computer systems.
 - We have made an offer and Chris Illingsworth has accepted the position of public safety assistant; he will start August 7. We shall bring all but the 2 new academy folks to the 7th meeting for you to meet.
 - We have a couple of projects coming to council for hopeful funding. One is a new office space barrier and the other is walls for evidence processing area.
 - Had a couple of major repairs on some cars.
 - Have a fiscal note coming to you at the next meeting to pay for our academy costs for 2 officers. Expect reimbursement but never a guarantee.
 - VFW post 10029 donated \$850 to our glow stick campaign I would like to say thank you to them for their support.
 - Please don't forget the fallen hero's ceremony on the 27th of July at 11am. We will honor our fallen heroes.
- Mr. Jacobson asked if the sewer problem in the new wing of the police station had been fixed.
- Chief Dutra said that the work has been done and the switch for the heat tape has been installed, but we really won't know until the weather hits 40 below if the problem really is solved.
- Ms. Welch asked now that the sewer problem has been addressed if the bad odors that were noticed are gone.
- Chief said that he thinks the odors from the floor drains drying out because of the in-floor heating. The

plan moving forward is to dump liquid down them on an occasional basis so that the things causing the bad odors really go down the drains.

Fire Department, Chief Heineken

- One last reminder, the fire department's open house will be this coming Saturday from 10am-2pm. We will be conducting a push in ceremony for the new fire engine around 1pm.
- The new fire engine did arrive last week, there was some minor damage to the underside of the apparatus caused from either loading or unloading onto the barge. Hughes Fire and Equipment is the dealer we purchased the apparatus through and they quickly had an assessment of the damages done and they will have all necessary parts shipped directly from the Pierce factory. Our staff have been busy mounting equipment and tools onto the new engine. This week there will be a considerable amount of training on the new apparatus, with a goal to place the Engine into front line service shortly after the fire department open house on Saturday.
- With the hot summer temperatures, we have had this week the fire department would like to remind everyone that colder temperatures will be back before you know it. Now is the best time to perform routine maintenance on your winter heating devices. Have your boiler tuned up, your wood stove chimney cleaned and check your vehicle heaters for damage or worn electrical cords. The fire department experiences a surge in fires each fall, and we often hear a similar message from homeowners after a fire, "this was the first time we turned the heat on since last winter". Having a professional technician maintain your device is inexpensive insurance and could prevent a tragic fire.

Mr. Jacobson asked about the push-in ceremony for the new fire truck and asked what kind of activities will be there.

- Chief said that it is a long-standing fire station tradition to have the fire department push into the bay new engines. He said that in addition to the food, they will be showing all of the engines and ambulances, they have a blow-up inflatable slide, there will be a set up of a fire hose for people to use. The Red Cross will be offering some CPR training also. The purpose is to come and meet the fire department. The address for the fire station is 110 Lewis St.

Mr. Jacobson asked Chief if he has given any thought to the recent ordinance that the City of Fairbanks was considering regarding private ambulances operating in the city boundaries.

- Chief Heineken said that he took a look at it and does not feel that those steps are necessary here in North Pole. But he said that should we ever start seeing that as a problem that he will be sure to bring that forward to the Council.

Finance, Tricia Fogarty

- Ms. Fogarty said that she sent out a schedule of revenues, 2021-23, year to date earlier today. She let Mr. Skippis know that she was having issues with his email address.
- She wished Ms. Glab well on her next adventure and said that it was lovely working with her and is sure that we will be seeing her from time to time.

Ms. Clack thanked Ms. Fogarty for working so hard on the audit. She said that she saw firsthand Ms. Fogarty and her staff putting in the hours and their hard work paid off.

- Ms. Fogarty thanked her and replied that she didn't do it alone, that she has an amazing staff. She said that it has been a roller coaster of a year of a year and would never choose to go through a software conversion again. She said that once they have the ongoing issues worked out that she feels they will have a better product.

Mr. Jacobson said that it was wonderful to hear that the audit came out as wonderful as it did and that we have a positive fund balance contribution and that all the numbers fell into pace with just minor issues. And thanked Ms. Fogarty for her accuracy and her diligence.

Director of City Services, Danny Wallace

Special Topics

- Moose Creek
 - HC should have all final construction tasks completed by the end of July; these consist of dirt leveling, seeding, and mounding. We are not confident that they can meet this goal, but are working with them.
 - We also had a meeting with Respec today about water meter replacements (comms issues). They have replaced 95% of all meters and will hand that task off to the City at the end of the month. No issues and we'll finish the last 10 replacements.
 - Finally, we are awaiting final estimates from both Respec and HC to ensure our current project budget support supports the projected costs.

Building Department

- ACS did a site survey and fixed one of the sites we reported (the utility box in the roundabout). Still awaiting a status on the ACS building (they surveyed it, but have not got a plan yet).
- We received a call from the project manager for the Wescott Pool upgrade (an \$8M /9 month project). They have scaled back this project and will send an updated plan. They are on track to start in March 2024 and finish in Dec 2024 (pool will be closed during that time)
- We've spent time doing compliance notifications with several residents. In response to one query, City Attorney Mr. Wilson provided input on one case and clarified that our City has the authority to require building permits for structures built within the City and is commonplace throughout Alaska and indeed the entire United States.

Public Works Department

- Beautification efforts continue to include the addition of a retaining wall on the outside the Chambers and Police Department. We still have the parking lot resurfacing and repainting in the queue (that will occur later this month or in early Aug)
- They have been doing numerous utility locates for gas and streetlight installation (been very busy with this task).
- For the streetlight installations, they have shifted to pile driving, welding pile caps, installing j boxes and backfilling and grading. We did have some local residents concerned about pole location and DOT's contractors were able to accommodate those requests. There is a request for proposal for the replacement of the Candy Cane LED lights (part of this project) – still awaiting results.

Utility Department

- The Utility Department has also been busy doing locates for local construction.
- We did receive a request to discharge 100,000 gallons of treated wastewater into our sewer system from the North Pole Refinery. This has been tested (and conforms to requirements) and we approved the discharge into our system. These types of discharges routinely occur and similar ones occur every 2-3 months
- Finally, we received feedback from DEC regarding an ongoing PFAS monitoring effort at the North Pole Fire Department (this is a known issue that we've been tracking since early last year). DEC recommended continued monitoring at the Fire Station site and contaminated soil removal. We're currently working on getting a scope of work and proposal for that effort.

Mr. Anton asked if we had heard back from any of the grants in the works.

- Mr. Wallace said that we did not get the Denali Commission grant to fund the city water system. We did get a positive note from Senator Murkowski on the congressionally directed spending submission that we had done for the utilities infrastructure within Brookside Park is moving through the congressional processes. For the Combined Heat and Power Plant tomorrow they have a meeting with a financial organization that will talk about public/private partnerships financing for that project, there has been no other movement for opportunities for funding that project. The intent for that project is to receive funding to pay for it and not to put the city on the line to pay for it. They do not have any grants in the works for the funding of the new city fire department, but they continue to work with the grant writers on that. The city recently did receive a storm water drainage grant for a storm water study and within the next couple of weeks we will get the final report from that. That outcome will feed a plan and a grant package to forward to the federal government on how we need to redo our drainage systems within the city. In certain areas of the city there is habitual flooding, culverts need to be looked at, soil needs to be moved, we need to do some things and would like that to be paid for by grant monies as well. That grant is due in August. Grant efforts are a continuing process. Going up there is an infrastructure conference in Anchorage that AML is hosting in September and he will be attending that.

Ms. Clack asked about how the grant writers were doing with what what are asking them to do/paying them to do.

- Mr. Wallace said that yes they are, we are not getting the success that we were hoping for. But he also thinks it is because there are so many grants out there right now, that more people are putting in for them and he thinks that some of the remote villages in Alaska are a little more in need than we are. But they have meetings regularly to make sure that they are putting in for grants that align with the city's needs.

Mr. Jacobson thanked Mr. Wallace for all that he does.

Human Resources, Ellen Glab

- This was Ms. Glab's last meeting with us.
- She gave the Council an update on the training that was assigned. Ms. Dionne will be taking over monitoring the training.

Ms. Clack thanked Ellie for the wonderful job that she has done for the city.

Mr. Jacobson also thanked her, he said that she covered a lot of things within the HR department that were lacking, such as job descriptions, org charts, training and step requirements. He said that she is leaving us with a good foundation and whoever takes over her job responsibilities will be able to walk in and build upon that.

- Ms. Glab said that she is happy to say that there is a very good team here that works together and that she couldn't not have done those things without them because they all worked on different parts of that too. She said she appreciates the kind words and thanked him.

Mr. Cromer asked Ms. Glab if she thought that the HR administrator is important to the city or if she thought that the City Clerk could be combined with HR or if it should be its own position.

- Ms. Glab said that she thinks that the city is working towards having a full time HR person but agrees that we are not there yet and suggested a hybrid Deputy Clerk/HR with the City Clerk as the supervisor of that position. She said that she thinks that the HR position took up more time than initially thought and there is still a lot to do. She feels that combining the two positions is the most beneficial use of the position.

Mr. Jacobson said that that idea has been conveyed to the Council by the Clerk as well. Changing to position to 50% HR and 50% Deputy Clerk, so that the two positions can act as a back up to each other, cross training those two key positions. He also asked about the Empower plan advisor that will be coming to the City on August 10th. He asked if the employees know about that and asked if they have been signing up to fill up the spots that he has for 1 on 1's.

- Ms. Glab said that she does not have the info on if employees have been signing up for the 1 on 1's, but that she did send an email out to all of the current employees. She said that she has handed the project off to the City Clerk and that Ms. Dionne has been in contact with John on the details and his needs. She also let everyone that that the biometric screening for employees and spouses on the city health plan is scheduled for October 12, from 8am to noon.

Mr. Jacobson asked a few additional questions about the visit from Empower and the plans that will be discussed. He also asked about the cities contribution to PERS for each employee.

- Ms. Fogarty let him know that she would get some more info for him on those questions.

Borough Representative

- Mr. Cromer attended the FNSB meeting on 7/12/2023.
- This meeting was a special meeting regarding giving money to the school district. The meeting was very short and no decisions were made.

City Clerk's Office, Melissa Dionne

- Ms. Dionne reminded everyone that the filing period to run for Council is open and will remain open until 7/31/2023. So far, we have had 2 people turn in paperwork.
- She reminded the Council that she still has not received bios from everyone and would really like to see the Council section on the website complete.

- Ms. Dionne said that she has been working with HR on getting up to speed on duties, so that nothing is forgotten. She shared that she has been sharing ideas with the staff and Council about possible changes to the HR position a little to make the position work a little better for the city's needs.

Mr. Jacobson asked if the info that he and Ms. Clack provided for the election brochure last year was included on their Council bio pages.

- Ms. Dionne responded that yes, she has used that info and that Ms. Clack had provided additional pictures and that Mr. Cromer had also provided a new photo and some verbiage to use. On the other pages the info that is included for each Council member is their contact info and term.
- Ms. Dionne wished Ms. Glab the best of luck on her future and said that she enjoyed working with her and hoped to see her again soon.

ON GOING PROJECTS

None

New Business

- Ordinance 23-08, An Ordinance of the City of North Pole Amending Title 2 Personnel System

Ms. Clack *moved* to approve Ordinance 23-08

Seconded *by* Mr. Cromer

On the Ordinance

DISCUSSION

None

PASSED

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

No: 0

Absent: 1 - Mayor Welch

- Ordinance 23-09, An Ordinance of the City of North Pole Amending Title 2 Personnel System, Travel and Host Reimbursement

Ms. Clack *moved* to approve Ordinance 23-08

Seconded *by* Mr. Skipps

On the Ordinance

DISCUSSION

None

PASSED

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

No: 0

Absent: 1 - Mayor Welch

COUNCIL COMMENTS

- Ms. Welch thanked everyone for the prayers for the Mayors health in the invocation given by Mr. Skipps, she appreciates it. She wished Ms. Glab good luck in the upcoming election for the open City Council seats and her future endeavors. She reminded everyone to stay cool out there, to be sure and hydrate and to not start any fires.
- Mr. Keller wanted to echo some of the highlights from the department heads and that we have a lot going on within our community. The Fallen Heros ceremony on July 27th and the fire department open house this Saturday. He wanted also to echo Chief Heineken's plea for people to get things checked out, those pellet stoves, HRV systems checked, it's a great time to have your septic pumped rather than waited for the first freeze up, so check those things out. It is wonderful weather, although he said it is a little warm for him, but that he will take this over very humid places that he's been to before. He asked everyone to be safe, make the best decisions on how to spend your time and to look out for your neighbors.
- Mr. Cromer shared that he is glad that we have at least 2 candidates out there for the open Council seats, he did not want to run into an issue like last year and have to do another coin flip.
- Mr. Jacobson said that he appreciates all the efforts of the city employees when it comes to the audit and getting that final push in, also to all the other departments. The amount of work that you do, especially during the summer with our buildings. With the public works department there is just a lot of stuff to get done and of course with the police and fire are always kept busy no matter what and it is just one seasonal crisis to the next. He encourages everyone, even though we live in a small town where we are pretty safe because crime is low, to not invite criminal activity by leaving valuables in unlocked cars or leaving keys in your ignition or your cars running. So please be safe about that. He reminded everyone that he passed out some construction information about all the different projects going on in the Northern Region. Starting August 5-13th the Richardson Hwy at Airport will be closed so be prepared for that.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Welch *moved* to adjourn.

Seconded by Mr. Skipps

The regular meeting of Monday, July 24, 2023, adjourned at 8:25. p.m.

These minutes passed and approved by a duly constituted quorum of the North Pole City Council on Monday, July 24, 2023.

ATTEST:

Melissa Dionne, City Clerk