



**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, October 16, 2023, in the North Pole City Hall Council Chambers.

**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

Mayor Welch called the regular City Council meeting of Monday, October 16, 2023, to order at 7:00 p.m.

**Present:**

Mayor Welch  
Jeffrey Jacobson – Mayor Pro Tem  
David Skippis  
Chandra Clack  
Aino Welch  
DeJohn Cromer – Deputy Mayor Pro Tem  
Anton Keller -Alt. Deputy Mayor Pro Tem  
Larry Terch – Interim  
Benny Williams - Interim

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

Led by Emily Braniff

**INVOCATION**

Given by Ms. Welch

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Mr. Jacobson *moved* to approve the agenda of October 16, 2023

Seconded *by* Ms. Welch

Mr. Jacobson *moved* to amend the agenda of October 16, 2023, to consent the following

**New Business**

- a. Ordinance 23-14, An Ordinance of the City of North Pole Amending the 2023 Budget to Accept Grant Funds

Seconded *by* Ms. Welch

**On the Agenda as Amended**

DISCUSSION

None

PASSED

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

No: 0

Absent: 0

## **On the Agenda**

### **DISCUSSION**

None

### **PASSED**

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

No: 0

Absent: 0

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Ms. Welch *moved* to approve the minutes from the September 18, 2023, meeting.

Seconded by Mr. Keller

## **On the Minutes**

### **DISCUSSION**

None

### **PASSED**

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

No: 0

Absent: 0

## **COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR**

- Mayor Welch read a Proclamation for the 56<sup>th</sup> birthday of King Jesus North Pole (KJNP) and presented Dick Olson with a coffee pot and coffee for the next Over the Coffee Cup show.
- New Officer Tasmin Gregory was sworn in and pinned by Chief Dutra.
- The results of the October 3, 2023, Municipal Election were read into the record and the Election Results were certified by the Council.
- Council Member Benjamin Williams and Larry Terch were sworn in.
- Mayor Welch called for a 15-minute break so everyone could network and enjoy some cake and refreshments.

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

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

Tammie Wilson shared her concern about traffic on Lake Drive, she shared her grandchildren live on that street and their parents could not attend the meeting to share their concern. Ms. Wilson explained drivers drive fast on the road and that something should be done to discourage speeding.

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

Director of City Services, Danny Wallace

- Mr. Wallace reported on the 2023 Community Survey that was sent out to all North Pole residents and posted on the city website. He shared the stats of the demographic reports, residents' concerns, and answers to citizen questions.

Police Department, Chief Dutra

- Attended a meeting with FNSBSD administrators.
- Had some vandalism of several businesses in NP including the Police Department
- Police Department Statistics

Finance, Tricia Fogarty

- Ms. Fogarty spoke to the departmental transfers of funds that have taken place for the since the last City Council meeting.

Fire Department, Chief Heineken

- The last two weeks have been a difficult time for the fire department. Captain Richard Hagen II passed away at his home on Wednesday October 4th, just a few days prior to his 39th birthday. Richard served the community of North Pole while working for our fire department from 2008 through mid-2022. A funeral with full firefighter ceremonies and honors were held this past Saturday October 14th at the Summit Church here in North Pole. Richard will be profoundly missed by all that knew him. I would like to thank the North Pole Police Department for assisting in the funeral procession, Fairbanks Police Captain Nathan Werner for providing his music talents with the bag pipes and most of all I would like to deeply thank all the other fire departments in the Interior. The support they offered and provided for Richard's family and the North Pole fire department during this time was nothing short of amazing.
- The annual Interior Firefighters Ball was held Saturday evening. This event is held each year and allows fire service personnel throughout the interior of Alaska to come together in a formal social event. The Interior Fire Chiefs organization uses this venue to recognize and award outstanding performers in our industry by giving annual awards in the categories of, Firefighter, Company Officer, Chief Officer, EMS person, Support person, Fire Prevention Program and Fire Instructor. I would humbly like to announce that I have been awarded the Chief Officer of the year for 2023.
- All the parts needed for making the pump repairs to Engine 25 have arrived and it is now being re-assembled with the goal of having it running sometime this week. Due to the extensiveness of the repairs, it will then need to go through a full pump test. Each apparatus receives this pump test annually or after repairs to the pump itself. At the completion of a successful pump test, we will be able to put the Engine back into service as our second out Engine. Soon after that we hope to be able to make the transfer of Engine 24, to the City of Delta Junction.
- The fire department would like to give a big thank you to the staff at Public Works for the new stairs installed at the entrance of our training annex. The old stairs would become extremely slippery during winter months and was a significant fall danger. The very talented staff at public work were able to build new stairs using diamond grip strut stair treads.

- The senior class at North Pole High School has been working hard to prepare our training building for their haunted asylum. This should be a fun or scary event and we encourage everyone to come out and participate on October 27th and 28th from 5-9pm.

#### City Clerk's Office, Emily Braniff

- Ms. Braniff reported the Clerk's Office has been wrapping up after the October 3, 2023, Municipal Election. Ms. Braniff shared the Clerk's Office has completed travel plans for Mr. Terch and Mr. Williams, the new HR/Deputy Clerk and herself for AML in Anchorage, the first week of December. Ms. Braniff stated since the last Council meeting all employees have taken the required RISQ training.

#### Borough Representative, Council Member Chandra Clack

- North Pole City Charter would not allow for the change until it went before the vote of the citizens, which would not happen until 2024. If it was approved, it would not happen until 2025, creating two years of disenfranchised voters.
- This would confuse voters; municipal elections have always been held the first Tuesday of October. Changing to November in hopes to increase voter turnout, or get the military bases involved. May not be a good goal in the aspect that people may only turn out based on what seems to be the agenda for the federal election. Turnout may still be low, but municipalities will not get lost with the federal election campaigning. They may not know those that are voting for the Local and State elections.
- The City of North Pole, City of Fairbanks and FNSB have always budgeted and collaborated with each other to share the high cost of municipal elections. The Clerks have always worked well. If it's not broken don't fix it.
- More workers would have to be hired to help cover the cost of combined Local, State and Federal Elections. People would have to get into two different lines to vote. At that point these lines may be long, and they may have to wait for a while. More equipment may have to be purchased; the Borough just purchased new voting equipment for the municipal elections which is a cost North Pole shared in paying.
- This would create a lot of confusion for the voters. With rank choice voting and now all voting on the same day of November 2<sup>nd</sup>, just to increase the turnout of voters. Borough Ordinance No. 2023-58 was not well thought out on how it would affect voters. As well as they did not come and talk to the sister cities.

#### ON GOING PROJECTS

#### NEW BUSINESS

Resolution 23-16 A Resolution in Support of Continuing to Hold Local Elections in Early October.

Mr. Keller *moved* to approve Resolution 23-16

Seconded *by* Ms. Welch

## On the Resolution

### DISCUSSION

Tammy Wilson explained why the ordinance came to be and that it was for the purpose of increasing voter turnout and the expense of annual elections.

Mr. Jacobson shared his concern that the Borough did not speak to other municipalities about the change in the date of the local election. Mr. Jacobson reminded Ms. Wilson that the City of North Pole, City of Fairbanks, and Borough elections have always been held in collaboration with each other.

All members requested to be co-sponsors of the ordinance to hold local elections in early October.

### PASSED

Yes: Keller, Clack, Cromer, Skipps, A. Welch, Jacobson, M. Welch

No: 0

Absent: 0

Resolution 23-17, A Resolution of the North Pole City Council Designation City Officials' Authorization to Sign on City of North Pole Accounts.

Ms. Welch *moved* to approve the Resolution 23-17

Seconded *by* Ms. Clack

## On the Resolution

### DISCUSSION

None

### PASSED

Yes: Skipps, A. Welch, Cromer, Keller, Clack, Jacobson, M. Welch

No: 0

Absent: 0

## COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mr. Skipps thanked Council Members Welch and Cromer for their years of service and welcomed new Council Member Terch and Williams to the Council.

Mr. Keller reminded everyone that the roads are slippery and to drive safely in such conditions. He thanked Ms. Welch and Mr. Cromer for their time in service and welcomed the new members to the Council.

Ms. Clack thanked Mr. Cromer and Ms. Welch for serving on the Council with her for the past year and congratulated Mr. Terch and Mr. Williams for being elected to City Council.

Mr. Jacobson thanked Ms. Welch and Mr. Cromer for their six years of service to the community and welcomed Mr. Terch and Mr. Williams to the Council. Mr. Jacobson congratulated Chief Heineken for being awarded the Fire Chief of the Year by the Interior Fire Chiefs Association and thanked all staff for the work that they continue to do.

Mr. Cromer shared that he has enjoyed serving, thanked all the city departments for helping him understand the needs of the city and that he looks forward to having Monday's free going forward. Mayor Welch presented Mr. Cromer with a plaque thanking him for his years of service to the City of North Pole.

Ms. Welch thanked the city staff for the help that she has been provided over the years and that she has learned a lot. Ms. Welch stated she has enjoyed being a city and borough representative and shared that voting is a privilege and that she has not missed an opportunity to vote since she became a citizen. Ms. Welch encouraged citizens to get involved in local government so they can have a voice. Ms. Welch welcomed Mr. Terch and Mr. Williams to the Council and asked them to be good stewards of the city's finances. Mayor Welch presented Ms. Welch with a plaque thanking her for her years of service to the City of North Pole.

Mayor Welch spoke to the celebration of life that occurred the past weekend for Richard Hagen II and how special he was to the City of North Pole Fire Department. Mayor Welch shared that it was a beautiful celebration, how professionally it was handled and that there were a lot of family and friends there to remember Mr. Hagen. Mayor Welch shared condolences for his family and friends and that the small Fire Department family showed a great amount of support in his honor.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Ms. Cromer *moved* to adjourn.

Seconded *by* Ms. Welch

The regular meeting of Monday, October 16, 2023, adjourned at 9:11 p.m.

These minutes passed and approved by a duly constituted quorum of the North Pole City Council on Monday, October 16, 2023.

ATTEST:

  
Emily Braniff, CMC  
City Clerk



  
Mayor, City of North Pole, Alaska