



**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, January 16, 2024, in the North Pole City Hall Council Chambers.

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Mayor Pro Tem Clack called the regular City Council meeting of Monday, January 16, 2024, to order at 7:00 p.m.

Present:

Chandra Clack – Mayor Pro Tem
Larry Terch – Alt. Deputy Mayor Pro Tem
Jeffrey Jacobson
Benny Williams

Absent:

Mayor Welch
Anton Keller – Deputy Mayor Pro Tem
David Skippis

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE U.S. FLAG

Led by Mayor Pro Tem Clack

INVOCATION

Given by Mr. Terch

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Jacobson *moved* to approve the agenda of January 16, 2024

Seconded *by* Mr. Terch

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

- a. Ordinance 2024-01, an Ordinance to Accept Board of Adjustment Duties from the Fairbanks North Star Borough to Hear and Decide Appeals of Certain Land use Decisions for Land Located Within the City of North Pole
- b. Request to Council – Water Main Replacement Design Loan Acceptance

On the Agenda

Minutes

January 16, 2024

NOT A VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT

DISCUSSION

None

PASSED

Yes: Williams, Terch, Jacobson, Clack

No: 0

Absent: Welch, Keller, Skipps

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Terch *moved to approve* the minutes from the January 2, 2024, meeting.

Seconded by Mr. Williams

On the Minutes

DISCUSSION

None

PASSED

Yes: Williams, Terch, Jacobson, Clack

No: 0

Absent: Skipps, Keller, Welch

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR

Mayor Pro Tem Clack shared that she has spoken with local legislators, and they were interested in North Pole's Legislative Priority Resolution 2024-02 Northern Railway project. Mayor Pro Tem Clack asked citizens to flood legislators' emails requesting that they make it a priority as well.

COUNCIL MEMBER QUESTIONS OF THE MAYOR

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

(Names of Citizens who provide comments may not be spelled correctly if their name is illegible or is not noted on the public testimony register.)

Howard Rixie read a letter that the North Pole Chamber of Commerce Board wrote to encourage Christmas themed businesses in North Pole. The letter requested a one-time tax incentive to businesses that embrace decorating their storefront in the Christmas theme.

Mr. Jacobson asked Mr. Rixie if he had heard of Leavenworth, Washington, he shared he had not. Mr. Jacobson shared it was an old logging town that adopted a Bavarian-style Christmas theme and the whole community has adopted the transition.

Tammie Wilson spoke against Ordinance 2023-17, sharing that there is no reason to add an additional layer of regulation which seems extreme. Ms. Wilson shared that she appreciates meeting in public but that in the future she would like a simple answer to an email by email.

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Rita Trommeter shared that she has lived in North Pole since January of 1988 and that she does not support Ordinance 2023-17 because the citation is already ticket-able by the State of Alaska. Ms. Trommeter stated North Pole should have a cheery Christmas spirit, not a city of harassment for a fee. Ms. Trommeter stated the North Pole Police Department has many bays and they should be made available for vehicle repairs for citizens hazardous vehicle repairs. Ms. Trommeter asked the Council to share the real intent of the ordinance.

Barbara Haney shared the part of North Pole that she loves is the beautiful decorations that are displayed on the way into the city. Ms. Haney stated she frequents many businesses in North Pole but that she will stop supporting it if the Council passes Ordinance 2023-17. Ms. Haney stated she is worried about driving in North Pole because a \$500 ticket for a bad headlight is beyond her ability to pay.

Sandra Rolfe noted that she has a good relationship with the North Pole Police force but that she does not support the hazardous traffic ordinance.

Corey Montague stated North Pole is his home but that he has lived other places where he could tell what time of the month it was based on how many officers were out writing tickets. Mr. Montague asked the Council to fail the ordinance.

Ella Cotter stated she does not live in city limits but that she has a concern for her granddaughter driving in North Pole and getting an expensive traffic ticket.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM DEPARTMENT HEADS, BOROUGH REPRESENTATIVE

Fire Department, Chief Chad Heineken

Chief Heineken reported it has been a busy new year at the department. Chief Heineken shared with the Council that he is working on an Apprentice program at the Fire Department. He reported he is working with staff and legal to determine how to create a sixth category of employees that exempts them from all benefits except PERS.

Chief Heineken shared that he met with George Stephan from the Fairbanks North Star Borough Planning and Zoning Department regarding the new Fire Station and the cul-de-sac that is zoned on the proposed property. He spoke of options to divide the property up to vacate the cul-de-sac which would allow the new fire station to proceed.

Mr. Jacobson asked if the city could combine the properties to make one large parcel, Chief Heineken shared the next step is having a surveyor out to assess the property. He shared that Council would be the final authority on what happens with the property, but it is multiple months away.

Chief Heineken reported that his department saved a home from fire earlier in the day and shared that he is happy to have an energetic, excited staff. He shared there was a tote of fuel actively burning when they showed up on the scene, but they saved the home for the family. Chief Heineken stated if they had shown up two minutes later the gable end of the roof would have been encompassed, but his staff performed flawlessly and saved the house. Chief Heineken praised his staff for the job well done.

Mayor Pro Tem Clack asked Chief Heineken to thank his staff for doing such a wonderful job saving the home for

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the family.

Public Works/Utilities, Danny Wallace

Moose Creek – We continue to push forward with this effort to bring clean water to the 200+ residences in the Moose Creek area. Right now, we are in the final stages of the project and Contract Modification #29 has just been approved by the Corps of Engineers. This increases the overall project ceiling by \$119,000 and allows us to cover expenses for HC Contractors (for parts and work this summer), for Respec Engineering (project management) and City time spent on this project. We anticipate that this last modification, to be signed by the Mayor Pro Tem, will be the last one for this project.

Emerging Contaminants Meeting – Tomorrow, we'll be hosting a virtual meeting with staff members from the Air Force, State of Alaska, EPA and FNSB discussing emerging contaminants (i.e., PFAS) that potentially will impact the North Pole area in the future. This is an informal staff-level discussion that will discuss monitoring efforts, predictions on future contamination, and potential mitigation options. For reference, the State of Alaska has a useful PFAS page (just Google "Alaska DEC and PFAS") and we've posted updated information on our own website. This remains a concern for the area and a key topic for discussion with those partners. Ms. Clack and myself will attend this meeting.

Public Works - We've done our fifth snow plowing of the year (finished today) for City streets and PW continues to work on the sidewalks (they had to do those three times today). We have not planned another plowing (most of the roads are good) but are ready to do that if needed. You'll see some additional holiday decorations in front of the city – our PW artisans (or Elves?) continue to work to make the city shine during these dark winter nights. Another item of note – we've had issues with the fire alarm system at City Hall. It is operational, but the trouble alarm keeps going off. We're working with Johnson Controls to solve this issue.

Building Department - We continue to see a few building permits for indoor work, to include the old Pizza Hut building on Santa Claus Lane. We expect an increase in applications as we move into spring.

Utilities - No significant issues to report (which is good). The most significant item is the final approval of the planning and design loan from the State Revolving Fund, which will help in efforts to address our failing downtown water main system.

Mr. Terch asked how long it would be until the light pole that DOT knocked down would take to be replaced, Mr. Wallace reported it would be six to eight weeks out.

Police Department, Chief Steve Dutra

Chief Dutra shared he is available for anyone who may have questions about the traffic hazard ordinance. Chief Dutra stated he is working with Human Resources to come up with a better solution for the next new hire that will attend Academy.

City Clerk, Emily Braniff

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Ms. Braniff shared a fun fact Finance Director Tricia Fogarty revealed, that the City of North Pole was established January 18th, 1953, 71 years ago to the day. Ms. Braniff thanked Ms. Fogarty for all of the intuitional knowledge she has shared with herself and Human Resources Administrator/Deputy City Clerk Maggie Kimmel and for holding the Clerk's Office together over many years and multiple clerk changes. Ms. Braniff reported she had Jon Huff with AUP out to fix the audio feedback issue and now Zoom can be heard in Council Chambers.

Mr. Terch asked if there would be a Human Resource report, Ms. Braniff shard that Ms. Kimmel works in her department and is not required to attend the meeting. Mayor Pro Tem Clack asked how many employees have completed their annual training, Ms. Braniff replied she spoke with Ms. Kimmel the first day the training was sent out and 40% of employees had responded but that she had not asked for an update since. Mr. Jacobson thanked Ms. Kimmel for sending out the required training to Council and staff.

Borough Representative, Mayor Pro Tem Clack

Mayor Pro Tem Clack reported on items that were discussed at the Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly meeting. Ordinance 23-65 was voted on relating to Newby Park and quorum for the Planning Board being the most spoken of at the meeting.

ON GOING PROJECTS

NEW BUSINESS

- a. Ordinance 2024-01, an Ordinance to Accept Board of Adjustment Duties from the Fairbanks North Star Borough to Hear and Decide Appeals of Certain Land use Decisions for Land Located Within the City of North Pole

Tammy Wilson shared the history of the Planning Commission and spoke in support of North Pole deciding their own appeals.

Mr. Jacobson encouraged the Council to accept Board of Adjustment duties and shared the salon on 5th Avenue closing as reason. Mr. Williams asked if it only affects property in North Pole City limits and asked if he could sit on the Planning Commission. Mr. Jacobson shared that if he were on the Planning Commission, he would not be able weigh in on the North Pole Board of Appeal hearing if an item came up for consideration.

Mr. Jacobson *moved to advance* Ordinance 2024-01

Seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Clack

On the Ordinance

DISCUSSION

None

PASSED

Yes: Williams, Clack, Jacobson, Terch

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No: 0

Absent: Keller, Skipps, Welch

b. Request to Council – Water Main Replacement Design Loan Acceptance

Mr. Wallace gave an update to the Council on the process of accepting the loan funds and the timeframe for repayment of the loan.

Sandra Rolfe asked if the loan on the ballot in 2023 was the loan that Mr. Wallace was speaking of Mr. Jacobson confirmed it is the same loan.

Mr. Jacobson stated it is most important to confirm the design of the water main project and encouraged the Council to move forward in accepting the loan.

Mr. Terch shared his concern for PFOS affecting the water main project in the future, Mr. Wallace stated they are looking at all the options, but the center of the city water main is the part that must be replaced relatively soon. Mr. Jacobson shared Mr. Terch's concern and that the pipes are well past their life expectancy. Mr. Jacobson stated there will never be enough money for all the wishes of the city and future needs must be considered but that the water lines are likely being held together by the frozen ground.

Mr. Jacobson *moved to approve* the Water Main Replacement Loan

Seconded by Ms. Clack

On the Request

DISCUSSION

None

PASSED

Yes: Terch, Clack, Jacobson, Williams

No: 0

Absent: Skipps, Keller, Welch

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mr. Jacobson thanked everyone for coming out with their public testimony about the traffic hazard ordinance, assuring the Chambers that their voices were heard. Mr. Jacobson thanked Mayor Pro Tem Clack for the work she has been doing while Mayor Welch is out healing sharing that she has been putting in a lot of time worked to help the city and its employees.

Mr. Williams stated education is power for every action the Council takes and he thanked the public for coming out to share their opinions. Mr. Williams asked everyone to treat others as they wish to be treated.

Mr. Terch thanked everyone who came out to testify for coming out and sharing their voices with the Council. He echoed Mr. Jacobson's sentiment, thanking Mayor Pro Tem Clack for all the work she is doing while Mayor Welch is out of the office.

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Mayor Pro Tem Clack thanked the citizens who came out to testify on the traffic hazard ordinance. She thanked her staff and the clerk for helping her with the business of the city and for keeping her on track.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Keller *moved* to adjourn.

Seconded *by* Mr. Terch

The regular meeting of Tuesday, January 16, 2024, adjourned at 8:46 p.m.

These minutes **passed and approved** by a duly constituted quorum of the North Pole City Council on Monday, February 5, 2024.

ATTEST:



Emily Braniff, CMC
City Clerk





Mayor Pro Tem Chandra Clack