



**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 Tuesday, March 18th, 2024, in the North Pole City Hall Council Chambers.

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Mayor Welch called the regular City Council meeting of Monday, March 18th, 2024, to order at 7:00 p.m.

Present:

Mayor Welch
Chandra Clack – Mayor Pro Tem
Anton Keller – Deputy Mayor Pro Tem
Larry Terch – Alt. Deputy Mayor Pro Tem
Jeffrey Jacobson
David Skipps

Absent:

Benny Williams

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE U.S. FLAG

Led by City Clerk Emily Braniff

INVOCATION

Given by Mr. Keller

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Terch *moved to approve* the agenda of March 18th, 2024

Seconded by Mr. Skipps

Mr. Jacobson *moved to amend* the agenda to place item b. Request to Accept Grant Funds Cybersecurity Grant Funding (22SLCGP-GY22) and item c. 14Request to Council – Allocate FAST Funds for North Pole Streetlight Standardization

Seconded by Mr. Keller

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a. Ordinance 2024-03 An Ordinance of the City of North Pole Amending the Compensation for Council Members

NEW BUSINESS

- a. Request to Council – Ambulance Purchase
- b. Request to Accept Grant Funds Cybersecurity Grant Funding (22SLCGP-GY22)
- c. Request to Council – Allocate FAST Funds for North Pole Streetlight Standardization

On the Agenda, as Amended

DISCUSSION

None

PASSED

Yes: Clack, Terch, Keller, Jacobson, Skipps, Welch

No: 0

Absent: Williams

On the Agenda

DISCUSSION

None

PASSED

Yes: Jacobson, Skipps, Clack, Keller, Terch, Welch

No: 0

Absent: Williams

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Keller *moved to approve* the minutes of the March 4, 2024, meeting.

Seconded by Ms. Clack

On the Minutes

DISCUSSION

None

PASSED

Yes: Keller, Skipps, Terch, Jacobson, Clack, Welch

No: 0

Absent: Williams

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR

Mayor Welch spoke about the 2016 strategic plan that was commissioned by Agnew and Beck that has recently expired so he is working to update it. He reported he had an hour and a half Zoom meeting and City Services Director Danny Wallace had a lengthy meeting with them as well. Mayor Welch reported the strategic plan is what brings businesses to the city and used Three Bears as his reference. Mayor Welch invited Council members to attend the Military Appreciation Banquet that is coming up in April if they would like to.

COUNCIL MEMBER QUESTIONS OF THE MAYOR

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

Clinton Summers shared he is a retired social worker, and he would like to help North Pole by introducing Vertical Farms. Mr. Summers asked the Council to write a letter of approval for the greenhouse construction. Mr. Clinton asked the Council if there were any zoning requirements in North Pole, Mr. Jacobson stated the Borough is the zoning authority. City Clerk Emily Braniff shared she would send the website Mr. Clinton was speaking to the Council about in the morning.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM DEPARTMENT HEADS AND BOROUGH REPRESENTATIVE

Tricia Fogarty, Finance Director

Ms. Fogarty reported the financial and sales tax reports have been processed and sent to the Council.

Mr. Jacobson asked Ms. Fogarty about the increased sales tax rate for tobacco tax in North Pole, Mayor Welch reported it is 10% and is only applicable to wholesales.

City Utilities Director/Danny Wallace

Mr. Wallace stated this the Moose Creek Water Utility Project is in wrap up mode, with a close out date of March 31, 2024. Mr. Wallace reported he was contacted by Senator Lisa Murkowski's office notifying him that North Pole has been awarded \$2.5 million in grant funds to provide utility lines for affordable housing in the city. Mr. Wallace stated he has not received all the details, but the funds may not be limited only to Brookside Park. Mr. Wallace reported the Public Works Department has selected an applicant for the Public Works Assistant vacancy.

Ms. Clack asked if any of the grant funds could be used for the water mains, Mr. Wallace stated he did not have all the fine details on the grant but that he would investigate it.

Ms. Clack asked if Mr. Wallace spoke with the citizen who was upset with the hardpack removal, Mr. Wallace reported Hubbard Construction does the hardpack removal but that his number can always be given to citizens.

Mr. Terch asked Mr. Wallace to thank Public Works for the wonderful job they are doing clearing the ice off the sidewalks.

Mayor Welch asked Mr. Wallace to speak about the strategic plan, Mr. Wallace reported many members of the Council have been interviewed. Mr. Wallace stated affordable housing is a top priority in the plan as well as professional development of city staff.

Mayor Welch asked if Two Bears Consulting was still writing grants, but they have not heard back yet on grants submitted last year.

Ms. Clack asked about timeframe on hearing back from the grant writers, Mr. Wallace shared he continues to monitor the progress of the grants but that none have been awarded yet.

Fire Department, Chief Chad Heineken

Chief Heineken announced it is getting lighter and summer is on its way, he requested that everyone save the date of June 29th for the Fire Department Annual Open House. Chief Heineken stated he would share more details

Minutes

March 18, 2024

NOT A VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT

as the date approaches but to plan for the event. Chief Heineken spoke to equipment that is being replaced through grant funds and that he is thankful that the state can give assistance to the city. Chief Heineken stated he has very low turnover in his department but that he does have an employee that is leaving because he is running a family business. Chief Heineken thanked the Council and the Mayor for supporting the apprenticeship program as well as compensating his staff.

Mayor Welch asked Chief Heineken if he had an update on PERS, Chief Heineken stated he did not expect much change out of Juneau soon.

Mr. Terch asked for an update on the Apprenticeship Program at the Fire Department, Chief Heineken shared that he is getting tremendous feedback about the program. He shared that they will be hiring 3 apprentices starting just after graduation and they will be in a 12-month program, when complete they will be hireable at other departments.

City Clerk, Emily Braniff

Ms. Braniff reported the Clerk's Office continues to look for cost savings sharing there have been some duplicated professional contracts over the changeover in clerks. Ms. Braniff stated that Work Shield's online portal had been so quiet that a test was run to see if the program was working. Ms. Braniff reported that North Pole employees are happy employees and there has just been nothing to report.

Borough Representative, Chandra Clack

Ms. Clack reported action items that came out of the March 14th, Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly meeting.

Mr. Jacobson *moved* to suspend the rules to take a five-minute break, *seconded* by Mr. Keller.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a. Ordinance 2024-03 An Ordinance of the City of North Pole Amending the Compensation for Council Members

Mr. Jacobson *moved to adopt* Ordinance 2024-03 An Ordinance of the City of North Pole Amending the Compensation for Council Members

Seconded by Mr. Skipps

Mr. Terch shared being on City Council is an honor and being compensated for it is nice but that increases that are being asked for are too much.

Ms. Clack echoed Mr. Terch's statement, that it is an honor to serve but explained why she supported increases for Council members. Ms. Clack thanked the staff of the city for all the help and support that they gave her while she was Mayor Pro Tem.

Mr. Jacobson agreed that it is a privilege and honor to serve but that being active in meeting also deserves compensation. Mr. Jacobson shared the history of Council participation and the importance of being active in the community. Mr. Jacobson stated when the city was formed the mayor was not compensated financially and how compensating the mayor came to be. Mr. Jacobson stated the current Pro Tem has been putting in 20 hours a week working with staff and the position should be compensated for in the future.

Mayor Welch stated he is fortunate and privileged to serve and that it is not a perfect world, and that the mayor does a job they need to be compensated for.

Mayor Welch *moved to amend* Ordinance 2024-03 An Ordinance of the City of North Pole Amending the Compensation for Council Members to narrow the time frame for Mayor Pro Tem Compensation, no second.

On the Ordinance

DISCUSSION

None

PASSED

Yes: Clack, Skipps, Jacobson, Keller

No: Terch, Welch

Absent: Williams

NEW BUSINESS

- a. Request to Council – Ambulance Purchase

Chief Heineken spoke of the new ambulance and how it would benefit the Fire Department.

Mr. Jacobson *moved to approve* the Request to Council – Ambulance Purchase

Seconded by Ms. Clack

On the Request to Council

DISCUSSION

None

PASSED

Yes: Clack, Terch, Keller, Skipps, Jacobson, Welch

No: 0

Absent: Williams

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mr. Skipps spoke to the North Pole High School girls' basketball tournament schedule for the upcoming State Tournament in Anchorage. Mr. Skipps reminded everyone to drive safely.

Ms. Clack reported there is a Housing Action Symposium event at the Westmark Hotel on Thursday, March 21st. Ms. Clack reported on several community events that will be taking place in the upcoming week to include the

Minutes

March 18, 2024

NOT A VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT

Home Show at the Carlson Center over the weekend.

Mr. Jacobson thanked Mr. Summers for coming out and sharing the information about vertical gardens as it would dovetail into the combined heat and power project. Mr. Jacobson spoke about Senate Bill 175 which appears to be nothing more than a power grab by the state. Mr. Jacobson reported Senate Bill 200 which increases the employer's commitment from seven to nine percent to TERS/PERS. Mr. Jacobson reported Senate Bill 150 is a statewide Building Code requirement, which he shared concerns if it supersedes the City of North Pole Building Codes. Mr. Jacobson shared concern for the gaming industry proposed changes because so many non-profits benefit from the revenue from gaming. Mr. Jacobson encouraged Council members to contact their legislators and voice their concerns.

Mr. Jacobson stated the 2016 Strategic Plan that was wonderfully put together but nobody, but the mayor knew anything about it. He stated in the future he wants all future budgets, grant applications and purchases to tie back to the new Strategic Plan. Mr. Jacobson stated it is easier to show the community where money is going with the updated plan.

Mr. Jacobson referenced a flyer that is being put out by the North Pole Chamber of Commerce about the Annual Clean Up Alaska Day on May 11th. Mr. Jacobson stated the information about junk cars is valuable and suggested having the Code Enforcement Committee meet and discuss the two properties that are in violation.

Mr. Keller spoke about a Chamber of Commerce meeting he attended and spoke to the website that allows individuals to play with the state budget. Mr. Keller stated there was a presentation that spoke to shipping all of the 300 high security inmates out of state to save revenue. He reported it was an interesting meeting because the medical bills that get sent to the state after a prisoner dies or is let out have become a significant number. Mr. Keller stated he would like the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District to keep Eielson High School open as a sign to the community of Eielson that we care. Mr. Keller thanked Mr. Summers for bringing in the idea of vertical gardens because he thinks it would put food on the shelves at the new Three Bears and food for the community food bank.

Mr. Terch thanked Mr. Jacobson for bringing up Senate Bill 150 because the State is so diverse and challenging that enforcing a statewide building code would be a terrible thing for builders and realtors alike.

Mayor Welch spoke about the combined heat and power project and how it would help the community if it does come to be. Mayor Welch spoke to the history the project and of the abundant opportunities that will come from working on it. Mayor Welch encouraged everyone to pray for security going forward.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Terch *moved* to adjourn.

Seconded *by* Mr. Skippis

The regular meeting of Monday, March 18th, 2024, adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

These minutes passed and approved by a duly constituted quorum of the North Pole City Council on Monday, April 1st, 2024.

ATTEST:

Emily Braniff, CMC

Emily Braniff, CMC
City Clerk



Michael J. Webb

Mayor, City of North Pole, Alaska