

City Council Minutes
Regular Meeting
June 1, 2021 ~ 5:00PM
City Hall, Delta Junction, Alaska



CALL TO ORDER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE / PRAYER

Mayor Freda Degnan called the meeting to order at 5:03pm.

Council members physically present: Mayor Freda DEGNAN, Deputy Mayor Lou HEINBOCKEL,
Michael PRESTEGARD, Alan LEVINSON, Pete HALLGREN

Council present on phone: Erin CATTERSON

Council excused: Charles LESTER

Staff physically present: City Administrator Mary Leith, City Clerk Pat White

Staff present via phone: Finance Officer Stephanie Erickson, Administrative Assistant Flower Cole

Five members from the community were present, two attended by phone, and the meeting was broadcast over KDHS 95.5 FM radio.

AMENDMENTS ~ APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: Levinson moved to approve the June 1, 2021 agenda as presented; Heinbockel seconded.

Motion passed on a roll call with six in attendance.

AMENDMENTS ~ APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

White reported "auction" was changed to "auctioned" (*Airport Report* – page three).

Motion: Levinson moved to approve the May 18, 2021 minutes as presented; Hallgren seconded.

Motion passed on a roll call with six in attendance.

COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Al Edgren shared photos of the Liewer-Olmstead Ice Arena exterior and asked to invest in maintenance of the building, particularly to repair metal siding on the west side near the outdoor rink where two significant areas were damaged during snow removal last winter.

Discussion followed regarding having an adjuster inspect the building, \$5,000 insurance deductible, previous damages to the northeast corner, increased participation in skating programs, and needed building upgrades.

Dave Becker referenced Granite Avenue discussion on May 18 and suggested removing a dirt berm to extend the road to the lots south of his home. The area is congested and septic systems will eventually need to be replaced, but developing Granite Avenue is not wanted or needed at this time.

Discussion followed regarding issuing a revocable license (2009 and 2019) to use Granite Avenue's right-of-way for Stanford Apartments' septic system, and avoiding stranded lots when selling property on the platted street.

REQUEST TO SPEAK - none

CORRESPONDENCE

Remembrance of Roy Gilbertson

Degnan reported Pete Hallgren's speech was a tribute to Mayor Gilbertson during his memorial service on May 23.

Hallgren stated his speech, which is on record, describes Mayor Gilbertson's contributions to this community.

Community Meeting and BBQ – June 15, 2021

Degnan reported Kinross – Mahn Choh will host a community BBQ at the City Park on June 15, 4:00-6:00pm.

Local residents are invited to meet the project team for an update on transporting ore from Tetlin to Fairbanks.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS - none

NEW BUSINESS

City Purchases over \$1,000

CK# 221278 to Randy Peterson - \$2,500.00 for auctioneering Airport II Subdivision Outcry Auction on May 21

Motion: Heinbockel moved to approve check #221278; Hallgren seconded.

Motion passed on a roll call with six in attendance (Levinson, Heinbockel, Prestegard, Hallgren, Catterson, Degnan).

Second Reading, Public Hearing, and Adoption of Ordinance 2021-04, An Ordinance for the City of Delta Junction Providing for a Budget for Fiscal Year 2022

Erickson referenced the May 18, 2021 budget draft, showing changes and footnotes that were discussed at the May 12 work session. The June 1 draft is a clean copy of the May 18 draft. Referring to street repairs, she reported the Department of Transportation alternates between crack sealing and patching roads. 2021 is designated for crack sealing.

Discussion followed regarding more expenditures identified during the May 12 work session, using \$30,000 from the FY21 budget for crack sealing streets, whether Fort Greely's contribution to the library can be reinstated, adding revenue from airport lot owner's annual crossing permits (\$250/year), new firefighting gear (\$1,800/set), and addressing improvements at the Liewer Olmstead Ice Arena, as requested by the Delta Skating Association.

Motion: Hallgren moved to replace the FY22 budget proposal, dated June 1, 2021, with an amended draft, to include: 1) changing \$50,000.00 in street repairs to \$30,000.00, 2) increasing new equipment for the Fire Department from \$10,200.00 to \$20,000.00, 3) adding airport revenue (\$2,500.00), and to hold a third reading, public hearing, and adoption on June 15, 2021; Heinbockel seconded.

Motion passed on a roll call with six in attendance (Hallgren, Levinson, Catterson, Prestegard, Heinbockel, Degnan).

Motion: Heinbockel moved to dedicate \$30,000.00 from the FY21 surplus to a savings for ice rink upgrades; Hallgren seconded.

Discussion followed regarding paving the inside of the Liewer-Olmstead Ice Arena and difficulty in getting estimates because of escalating costs of building materials.

Motion passed on a roll call with six in attendance (Heinbockel, Catterson, Levinson, Prestegard, Hallgren, Degnan).

Degnan called for public comments with Todd Zachgo expressing appreciation for the \$30,000 for the rink.

REPORTS

Mayor – no report

Airport – Alan Levinson reported:

- The airport will be busy with helicopter activity during the month of June.
- Five lots were sold during the airport outcry auction on May 21. The other five sold over the counter, all for the minimum bid (\$14,500).

[City Clerk note: An interested party left his number at City Hall should any airport lot owner wish to sell.]

Leith explained expenses and revenue, resulting in a \$54,801.44 profit from sale of Airport Subdivision II lots. Up to half of the cost to install power poles (\$25,000 for 2020 lots and \$50,000 for 2021 lots) could be recovered should new airport lot owners tie into the electrical poles within the first five years. She referenced a memo, dated June 1, and explained expenses (\$27,100 not including labor) to install two cul-de-sacs and finish roadwork in Airport Subdivision II.

Discussion followed regarding not subsidizing land development with general funds, depositing all land sale profits into the City's Permanent Fund, and putting in French drains instead of culverts.

Schools – no report

Emergency Services – no report

Emergency Preparedness – Mike Prestegard reported the earthquake (40 miles north of Chickaloon on Sunday, May 30) was felt in Delta. He asked people to educate themselves about situations that can be prevented, i.e. securing bookshelves so they do not topple over during an earthquake and pin people to the floor.

Health & Safety – Mike Prestegard reported:

- The State of Alaska dropped COVID mandates, but still recommend face coverings when around people outside their household, social distancing and good hygiene, and staying home when sick. Alaska has no entry or travel requirements to test for COVID, but they are offering free vaccines to all travelers to Alaska.
- Travel through Canada by land is prohibited unless carrying proof that travel is not optional, i.e. proof of residence or employment. For the most up to date information, go online (travel.gc.ca) or call (1-204-983-3500).

Public Works – Mike Prestegard, referring to a spreadsheet about history of Community Cleanup, reported there were only 40 loads of trash delivered to the landfill on May 15 compared to 2020 (133) and other years.

Hallgren said he would argue to return to the 50% savings next year, simply to promote utilizing the landfill.

Library – Freda Degnan reported:

- The library's summer reading program was altered because the school district is hosting one also.
- Library staff are preparing baskets for the annual fundraiser on June 12, 10:00-4:00.
- The seed swap was a success and little green plants should be growing around the community.

Landfill – Lou Heinbockel, complimenting Dennis Burke, reported the septic operation at the landfill is in better condition than in recent years.

Park & Recreation – no report

Cemetery – Lou Heinbockel reported the Memorial Day ceremony was held on May 31 at Rest Haven Cemetery.

At Large – no report

City Administrator – Mary Leith reported part-time summer hire positions were filled for lawn maintenance and library aide. Both pay \$11.50/hour.

City Clerk – Pat White reported:

- Declaration of Candidacy forms for the REAA School Board are available at City Hall, Division of Elections offices, or online (elections.alaska.gov). Three three-year seats (B, D, F) and one two-year seat (E) are on the ballot. The filing period ends August 6, 2021 and the REAA Election is on October 5, 2021.

- The filing period for the City's Municipal Election is August 20 through September 10, 2021. Seats A and E, both three-year terms, and Seat B, one-year remaining, will be on the October 5 ballot.

Finance – Stephanie Erickson reported Amber Rand, PHN, Public Health Service, applied for grant funds to award vouchers to people who get the COVID vaccine. The City will act as a pass-through agent, similar to LEPC or Delta Imagination Library grants. The campaign runs June 7 through August 13 and serves both Delta and Tok.

Additional Reports - none

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC AND COUNCIL COMMENTS

Jerry Zachgo, referring to conversation about earthquakes (*Emergency Preparedness Report* – page 2), suggested preparing emergency patient transport kits to use in mass casualty situations. Kits are shrink wrapped and consist of a Stokes Litter, backboard, spider strap, pillow and blanket. They're efficient, easy to transport, and they eliminate using ambulance supplies.

ADJOURNMENT – 6:51pm

Mayor Freda Degnan

CITY
SEAL

Pat White, City Clerk

Approved: June 15, 2021

Remembrance of Roy Gilbertson
Pete Hallgren May 23, 2021

Roy Gilbertson was an integral part of the Delta area for over 60 years. I will speak of the middle, the late 90s to mid 00s when Roy stepped up to the plate as Mayor when the future of our community hung in the balance: BRAC 95, Private Prison, and Missile Defence.

The entire Delta community was in turmoil, and rightly so, since the federal decision to close Fort Greely threw folks out of work, depressed property values, collapsed businesses, disrupted families. Folks were understandably desperate to find a solution to preserve our way of life. And good people came to conflicting positions.

Its not my purpose to belittle anyone or to stir up bad memories, but to remember the good that came out of it for us all. Its now over 20 years ago. Memories fade and a new generation has grown up or moved here that has no knowledge of the knife edge Delta's future teetered on.

In retrospect, we can see that the Grace of God, and the leadership of Roy Gilbertson saved the day for Delta. It must be remembered at this memorial. I had the privilege of seeing Roy's tenacity and work ethic up close on a daily basis as we went through the crisis.

Congress mandated the closure of a number of military bases in 1995 (Base Realignment and Closure 1995) including Fort Greely. The statute made provision for deeding the buildings and surrounding area to an organization committed to coming up with a fiscally reasonable re-use or re-purposing plan. For Delta Junction, painted most bleakly, it meant deeding over to private hands most of the Cantonment area with massive buildings and military housing units with asbestos and petroleum contamination and in the middle of which sat an entombed deactivated nuclear power plant not fully decontaminated of radio active debris.

A community based redevelopment committee was established in Delta to find a fiscally responsible way to reuse Fort Greely. Several years study turned up only one major proposal. A company proposed to turn the base into a privately owned and operated prison to house Alaska felons under contract with the State of Alaska and providing jobs in the Delta area. Some saw it as the only realistic economic salvation others saw it as a harmful boondoggle. Delta was split. Jobs were being lost, Time was running out.

As with most complicated things, the devil is in the details. And Roy didn't like the details.

Evidently the State of Alaska was also dubious, and by the time the Legislature passed the authorizing bill in 1998 to contract the use of the private prison, it was political sausage requiring the City of Delta Junction to own the prison and take on the financial liability and contract out the construction of a 20 year prison, but only contract out the operation for 5 year periods.

Private citizen Roy Gilbertson decided to run for Mayor. In Delta, the Mayor is appointed by the City Council from among its members. Neither the Mayor, nor any Council members are paid anything, not even a meeting stipend. Never have been. You have to run for election for the privilege of donating your energies to working on knotty problems. But that is the Delta way of volunteerism in so many activities.

Roy was elected, and the City Council appointed him Mayor, and Roy got to work. The Director of the Community reuse Committee resigned, the City took it over and Roy hired me to take the Director's place. I quickly came to the same conclusion as Roy. The private prison terms were not in the best interest of Delta. A majority of the City Council agreed. The private prison company threatened to sue the City if it didn't sign a contract with them. Time was running out, jobs were going away.

Roy wasn't just anti prison person, he also had a better dream for Delta. Keeping Fort Greely open and making it home of a National Missile Defense system. Something Delta could take pride in to better help our entire country. A national missile defense system was a dream of many in the country, but it had to pass congress and be authorized by the President. Delta Junction in Alaska was only one of a number of potential sites that could provide a defense for the entire continental US

Roy would start making calls to DC at 4am Alaska time to our congressional delegation, to the Office of the Secretary of Defense and anyone involved in the idea. I was delegated to go to DOD and BRAC officials and talk missile defense for Ft. Greely. BRAC laughed but we got the only BRAC 95 time extension granted any installation. But jobs were still being lost.

The Department of Defense is always making detailed plans for multiple options so things can be done quickly once a president makes a decision. Roy worked closely with DOD to draft a plan for additional municipal infrastructure in Delta to help integrate the potential future Ft. Greely soldiers and staff into the Delta community. We were told that nothing like that had been done since the northern tier missile silos had been constructed in North Dakota and Montana in the 60s and 70s, and we worked on specific project plans and budgets. All contingent on Missile defense being approved and Fort Greely being selected as the site.

The prison company sued, claiming breach of contract and asking for millions in lost profits and Roy was castigated in political cartoons in the local newspaper. The trial date approached.

Bush and Gore duked it out in the presidential race and the presidency hung in the balance for a month with the Florida vote totals being litigated over hanging chads and the count finally settled by the Supreme Court.

President Bush was declared elected, he declared that a national missile defense was a priority and a project site needed to be determined. With about two weeks left in the BRAC extension term, the City of Delta Junction gave official notice that it would not be turning in an ownership plan for Fort Greely. Congress quickly voted to remove Fort Greely from BRAC, and Fort Greely became the selected site for the National Missile Defense. Fort Greely is the only military base that Congress has ever un-BRACed.

Roy then got busy dealing with Missile base construction contractors like Boeing and others to get the most and best jobs of Delta folks on Base. DOD also funded the Municipal infrastructure program previously worked out and the City built the new library, new landfill, new fire hall, new television and radio repeaters, major improvements to the hockey building and a new zamboni, fire trucks for both the City and Rural Deltana Volunteer fire depts. Senator Stevens got the School Board the funds to build the new grade school.

The prison lawsuit was settled a week prior to trial as the prison interests desired to move their hopes to another Alaska community. The City paid a little over a million dollars, borrowed from the

Legislature in a 20 year loan at zero percent interest. The City has now paid more than half of the amount on time and in full.

Roy also worked closely with the Pogo mine through their successful opening worked tirelessly on many projects in his 8 years as Mayor, and always for the benefit of the entire Delta area. He was the right person for a pivotal time in Delta. I am convinced that by the Grace of God, and the unstinting work and leadership of Roy Gilbertson, this little Delta town and area has not only prospered but has become an important home for our entire nations first defense against enemy ballistic missiles.

Roys legacy continues to this day, but he never claimed it as his own, but one by and for all of us.

His 2006 resignation letter is as fresh today as when he wrote it, and I will close by reading it.



City of Delta Junction

P.O. Box 229, Delta Junction, Alaska 99737
Ph 907-895-4656 Fax 907-895-4375
www.ci.delta-junction.ak.us
city@ci.delta-junction.ak.us

Welcome to the Friendly Frontier

Roy Gilbertson
Mayor, Council Seat B
Term Expires 2007

Mary Leith-Dowling
Mayor Pro Tem, Seat A
Term Expires 2006

Lou Heinbockel
Council Seat C
Term Expires 2008

Leslie A. Fellner
Council Seat D
Term Expires 2007

Mike Jenkins
Council Seat E
Appointment Expires 2006

Pablo Martinez
Council Seat F
Appointment Expires 2006

Michael Tvenge
Council Seat G
Term Expires 2007

Pete Hallgren
City Administrator

Pat White
City Clerk

Dave Zimmerman
Finance Officer

Letitia Burcham
Administrative Asst.

Jim DeWitt
City Attorney

Lamar Cotten
City Consultant

July 5, 2006

Dear City Council members:

Please accept my resignation from City Council to allow me time with my family. I am grateful to have served as Councilman and Mayor for the past 8 years.

As a 51-year resident of Delta Junction I've seen our community grow from a small wide spot in the road to what we have now, with a population of over 5,000. I attribute the success of our community to the many dedicated volunteers that have given so freely of themselves over the years. Our community is one to be proud of.

I would like to thank the public that attends our Council meetings and shares their input. We, as government leaders, appreciate the support and guidance received from our neighbors.

Lastly, I would like to ask that our Council continue to open every meeting with prayer for I strongly believe that we must depend upon God's guidance and wisdom in all of our decision-making.

I especially wish to thank my fellow Council members for your continued service to our community.

Respectfully,



Thomas "Roy" Gilbertson