

City Council Minutes
Regular Meeting
April 1, 2025 ~ 5:00PM
City Hall, Delta Junction, Alaska



CALL TO ORDER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE / PRAYER

Mayor Igor Zarembo called the meeting to order at 5:02pm.

Council members present: Mayor Igor ZAREMBA, Deputy Mayor Mary LEITH, Pete HALLGREN, Michael PRESTEGARD, Stormie MITCHELL, Lance STRICKLIN

Council excused: Travis RIESNER

City staff present: City Administrator Lori Roberts, Equipment Operator Henry Muth, Landfill Operator Tenali Hicks, Landfill Scale House Operator Reta Russell-Houghton, Library Aide Shone Hilton, City Clerk Pat White

Public present: Approximately 30 people (13 on Zoom) were present at the beginning of the meeting. The meeting was broadcast over KDHS 95.5 FM radio.

AMENDMENTS ~ APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Zarembo called for objection to adding Chris Morley and Earl McNabb to *Request to Speak* and to remove *Community Center Renovation Bids* from *Unfinished Business*.

Motion: Leith moved to approve the April 1, 2025 agenda as amended; Stricklin seconded.

Motion passed on a roll with five in favor (Leith, Hallgren, Stricklin, Prestegard, Zarembo) and one opposed (Mitchell).

AMENDMENTS ~ APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

Motion: Hallgren moved to approve the minutes from the March 4, 2025 regular meeting; Stricklin seconded.

Motion passed on a roll with five in favor (Hallgren, Leith, Prestegard, Stricklin, Zarembo) and one opposed (Mitchell).

Motion: Leith moved to approve the minutes from the March 10, 2025 special meeting; Hallgren seconded.

Motion passed on a roll with four in favor (Stricklin, Leith, Hallgren, Zarembo) and two opposed (Prestegard, Mitchell).

Motion: Leith moved to approve the minutes from the March 18, 2025 regular meeting; Stricklin seconded.

Motion passed on a roll with five in favor (Prestegard, Stricklin, Hallgren, Leith, Zarembo) and one opposed (Mitchell).

Motion: Leith moved to approve the minutes from the March 21, 2025 special meeting; Stricklin seconded.

Motion passed on a roll with four in favor (Stricklin, Hallgren, Leith, Zarembo) and two opposed (Prestegard, Mitchell).

PUBLIC COMMENTS - none

REQUEST TO SPEAK

David Dawe – no show

Henry Muth, Equipment Operator, distributed his letter of resignation and read it aloud. He expressed concerns about what he believed was a hostile work environment that was created by the current administration. See additional discussion under *Mayor Report* (page 3).

Chris Morley reported he wanted to reinforce the importance of establishing a community-owned ambulance service. He distributed a revised five-year plan, different from the one he presented on March 4, 2025, and asked the Council to partner with Deltana Community Corporation (DCC) and commit to move forward with his plan, in which “no one would sign away their jurisdictions or lose their boundaries.” Morley spelled out a timeline (January 1, 2026 start date changed to July 1, 2025) and explained funding and operation scenarios. The plan would begin by selecting an interim EMS board and drafting a set of bylaws. A Medical Director has been hired and is standing ready.

Kurt Schmidt, DCC Vice President, reported he supports a community-owned EMS plan. DCC and the City can work with RAES if fundraising is transparent.

Amber White reported that the State EMS will help implement a plan after conducting the assessment. She asked to use their expertise before making decisions and she asked Morley if he would work with them.

Morley said the assessment will be predetermined because the same contractor conducts all the studies. The Council needs to move forward to “get the parties together to determine how to make a partnership work.”

Stricklin said he agreed with accepting the State’s recommendation because of their expertise.

Mitchell disagreed with accepting input from an outsider.

Morley asked the Council to review his plan. Any profits roll back into the plan, lowering the cost to the public, whereas DMT keeps all profits leftover in the current million-dollar agreement.

Earl McNabb thanked the Council for considering a community relationship. He said he worked with DCC for 15 years on several successful projects that were community-based. All parties need to be heard, to be part of the process. Any plan will fail if the community is divided.

CORRESPONDENCE

Delta Junction Trails Association – Review of 2025 Delta Junction Community Trails Plan

Ellen Clark, DJTA Secretary, and Mindy Eggleston, DJTA President, presented a draft of their updated Community Trails Plan. Clark reported they applied for a technical assistance grant last year from the National Park Service, Rivers, Trails and Conservation Association Program to update it. Public comment ends April 15. They are reviewing accomplishments over the past ten years, reevaluating proposals, updating maps, and incorporating community feedback. Email input to deltajunctiontrailsassociation@gmail.com. Clark and Eggleston reported DJTA has received a lot of support from the community during their 10-year history, including financial support from both the City and DCC.

Alaska Division of Forestry & Fire Protection – Review of Tanana Valley State Forest Mgt Plan

Zaremba reported April 18 is the deadline to submit comments to the Department of Natural Resources (dnr.for.tvtsfrevision@alaska.gov) about the State Forest Management Plan.

Ellen Clark reported that DJTA submitted a comment that related to recreational resources.

Salcha-Delta Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) – Herbicide Application at MP 1408 and 1402 Alaska Highway

Roberts reported Salcha-Delta SWCD is soliciting public comments by April 2, 2025 about using herbicide (Milestone) to control invasive plants at Mileposts 1408 and 1402, approximately 12 miles southeast of town.

Partners for Progress – Request to use 1997 Kenworth T-800 End Dump and Grader for Academy

Leith, Partners for Progress Board President, reported they would like to use the City's 1997 Kenworth End Dump and grader for the last two weeks of this year's Intro to Heavy Equipment Operator and Mechanic Academy. As usual, the Partners will maintain and be responsible for any damage to either vehicle. Discussion followed regarding the academy exposing young adults to career opportunities and the City supporting the academy by loaning equipment.

Motion: Stricklin moved to continue community outreach by loaning the dump truck and grader to Partners for Progress' 19th Annual Academy; Prestegard seconded.

Motion passed on a roll call with six in attendance (Leith, Mitchell, Prestegard, Stricklin, Hallgren, Zaremba).

The Big Delta Brewing Company – Request Diagram Change on License #5997

Roberts reported The Big Delta Brewing Company requested approval from the Alcohol and Marijuana Control Office (AMCO) to expand their licensed premises diagram, reallocating outdoor space as manufacturing and an outdoor eating area.

Motion: Leith moved to show no objection to the diagram changes to The Big Delta Brewing Company's licensed premises, reallocating outdoor space; Hallgren seconded.

Motion passed on a roll call with six in attendance (Mitchell, Prestegard, Leith, Hallgren, Stricklin, Zaremba).

Zoom

Roberts reported that the City provided Zoom capabilities to the public between February 2022 and April 2024 when the Council meeting was zoom bombed. It resumed August 6, 2024. Complaints have surfaced since January 2025 about accessing the zoom link (instructions on every agenda in the upper right corner). An email was received on March 21 from a made-up email that threatened legal action to stop the "illegal gatekeeping of public meetings."

Discussion followed regarding investing in microphones and speakers for the conference room and researching the pros and cons of providing zoom to the public.

Motion: Mitchell moved to resolve issues in providing Zoom capabilities to the public; Prestegard seconded.

Motion passed without objection.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Community Center Renovation Bids – removed from agenda

Sanitary Survey Bids

Roberts reported she received two bids. Goldstream Engineering bid \$7,150 and Taiga Engineering bid \$7,650 to conduct on-site inspections at five locations, the Visitor Center, Liewer-Olmstead Ice Arena, Community Library, City Hall, and the fire station.

Motion: Leith moved to award the Sanitary Survey contract to Goldstream for \$7,150.00; Stricklin seconded. Motion passed on a roll call with six in attendance (Stricklin, Leith, Hallgren, Mitchell, Prestegard, Zaremba).

Easement for Liewer Community Trail

[Ron Liewer, owner of lots in Block 16, deeded 16 lots to the City of Delta Junction, so that sections of the Liewer Community Trail would never be sold or developed and would remain forever in the public's ownership. Two local realtors guessed the lots were valued at a minimum of \$10,000 each.]

Roberts asked whether to renew the ten-year public access, which expires in August, or change it to perpetuity. Discussion followed regarding Liewer owning all lots in Block 16, except for the two closest to Nistler Road, and the likelihood of Quartz Avenue (separating Liewer's lots from the school district) never being developed.

Motion: Stricklin moved to vacate Quartz Avenue, a platted and undeveloped City street, and change the ten-year Public Recreational Easement to perpetuity; Leith seconded.

Motion passed on a roll call with six in attendance (Prestegard, Stricklin, Leith, Hallgren, Mitchell, Zaremba).

NEW BUSINESS

Purchases over \$1,000.00

CK #23509 to Aetna - \$17,213.80 for April group health insurance

CK #23510 to Vitus - \$7,372.31 for March heating and equipment fuel

CK #23511 to Delta Medical Transport - \$85,404.17 for April EMS contract

Discussion followed regarding #23509 (changes in Aetna policies, employees paying 4% toward health coverage, and negotiating changes during the budget cycle, including provisions for employees to opt out).

Motion: Leith moved to approve checks 23509 through 23511; Stricklin seconded.

Roberts referenced a handout about EMS savings that Kaylee Reiersen distributed for the March 28 meeting, and she reported the 3¢ landfill allocation toward EMS was \$66,953.08 for the first quarter of FY25 and \$57,878.80 for the second. With the \$15,000 payment from RAES, funding was available to pay the EMS contract for April (CK #23511).

Motion passed on a roll call with six in attendance (Leith, Hallgren, Stricklin, Prestegard, Mitchell, Zaremba).

Community Cleanup (Saturday, May 3, 2025) / 50% Discount at the Landfill (Saturday, May 17, 2025)

Zaremba reported he asked for two different Saturdays last year, one for community roadside cleanup and one for residents to clean their own yards.

Roberts reported she chose the two dates, so they did not conflict with the library's annual fundraiser (May 10) and the milepost dedication at the Visitor Center (May 24).

Motion: Stricklin moved to hold the annual Community Cleanup on May 3 and a 50% discount day on May 17; Leith seconded.

Motion passed on a roll call with six in attendance (Leith, Stricklin, Hallgren, Mitchell, Prestegard, Zaremba).

REPORTS

Mayor / Personnel - Igor Zaremba reported a recent firing of an employee, which resulted in hostility from other co-workers. Prior to termination, disciplinary measures were taken.

Discussion followed regarding informing individual Council members of the termination.

City Administrator / Public Works / Finance - Lori Roberts reported:

- Employees were asked not to get fuel at O'Morley's because of inability to provide receipts. Eighteen receipts, totaling \$1,472, were never turned in. Chris Morley is not currently set up for charge accounts.
- Two job openings will be advertised (a full-time maintenance technician and a part-time library aide).

- Alliance CPAs want another \$2,000, but they have not provided any paperwork for the FY23 audit, in which \$21,000+ has already been paid.

Hallgren clarified that there is no proof that Alliance did any work on the FY23 audit.

Roberts reported Altman & Rogers are working on the FY23 audit and expects to have it and FY24 done by the end of June.

- New maps of Delta Junction are in the process of being printed. Roberts explained minimal printing fees compared to purchasing a plotter and paying for its upkeep.

- A cell tower is being built on North Eielson.

Discussion followed regarding subdivision covenants, but no City Code that prohibits cell tower construction.

- Zender Environmental asked for a letter by April 7 to support their efforts in shipping and recycling electronic devices (Senate Bill 161). Council showed no objection.

City Clerk - Pat White reported:

- Kinross will host a job fair at the Community Center on April 24, 4:00-6:00pm. They are looking to fill positions in housekeeping, kitchen help, and janitors.

- Stormie Mitchell's restraining order and preliminary injunction against the City of Delta Junction was denied on March 28. Mitchell argued that the grounds stated in the recall petition were too vague to satisfy the statutory requirements. White reported the recall election would move forward on April 18, 2025.

- According to AS 29.26.330, the recall ballot must contain a statement by the official named on the recall of 200 words or less if the statement is filed with the clerk for publication and public inspection at least 20 days before the election. Nothing was received from Mitchell by Friday, March 28, so it was left blank on the ballot.

Cemetery – Lori Roberts reported the Veterans Memorial at Rest Haven Cemetery was selected as part of the Tour of Honor. Participating motorcyclists will visit memorials across the country to pay their respects. A banner was ordered and will be displayed on the cemetery fence through October 31, 2025.

Leith reported that the Pioneers of Alaska replaced their sign at Rest Haven Cemetery. Painting and cement work are postponed until warmer weather.

White reported the last winter grave was used and 38 plots are available to purchase in the original cemetery.

Library - Mary Leith reported the Library Open House and Block Party is scheduled for May 10, 11:00-4:00.

Emergency Preparedness - Lance Stricklin reported Red Card training to fight wildfires is scheduled May 26-30. There are many openings and a good opportunity for young adults to make an income.

Parks & Recreation – Lori Roberts reported a new hot water heater was ordered for the Liewer-Olmstead Ice Arena.

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENTS - none

Leith motioned to extend the meeting for another 15 minutes; Stricklin seconded.

Motion passed without objection.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – Mitchell Litigation

Mitchell, as the plaintiff, insisted on attending the executive session and refused to recuse herself.

Motion: Leith moved to go into the City Administrator's office for an executive session to discuss the Mitchell litigation; Stricklin seconded.

Motion failed on a roll call with three voting in favor (Leith, Stricklin, Zaremba) and three opposed (Hallgren, Prestegard, Mitchell).

ADJOURNMENT – 7:59pm

Igor Zaremba, Mayor

CITY
SEAL

Pat White, City Clerk

Approved: April ---, 2025