

City of Valdez

212 Chenega Ave.
Valdez, AK 99686



Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, August 19, 2025

7:00 PM

Regular Meeting

Council Chambers

City Council

REGULAR AGENDA - 7:00 PM**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Fleming called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**III. ROLL CALL**

Present: 7 - Mayor Dennis Fleming
Council Member Austin Love
Council Member Jimmy Devens
Council Member Olivia Foster
Council Member Joseph Lally
Council Member Joy Witte
Council Member Lester Greene

Also Present: City Clerk Sheri Pierce
City Manager Nathan Duval
Deputy City Clerk Elise Sorum-Birk
Administrative Assistant Katie Carr

IV. SWEAR-IN CITY COUNCIL APPOINTEE

Deputy City Clerk Elise Sorum-Birk administered the oath of office to Lester Greene.

Council Member Greene took his seat at the dais.

V. PUBLIC BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR**VI. CONSENT AGENDA**

1. **Appointments to the Valdez Consortium Library Board, Applicants: Carl Oberg and Michael "Jay" Stevens**
2. **Acceptance of Resignation of Library Board Member Sadie Blancaflor**
3. **Approval of Liquor License Renewal - 369 BPO Elks Lodge #2537**

Council Member Greene stated that he served on the board of directors for the organization but did not believe a conflict of interest existed.

Mayor Fleming asked City Council if there was any objection to Council Member Greene participating in the vote. No objections were raised.

4. **Approval of Liquor License Renewal - Valdez Food Cache #5612**

5. **Approval of Liquor License Renewal - Growler Bay Brewing Company #5634**
6. **Approval of Liquor License Renewal - Nat Shack #5932**
7. **Approval of Renewal of Marijuana Dispensary License - Herbal Outfitters LLC #10173**

MOTION: Council Member Devens moved, seconded by Council Member Lally, to approve all items on the consent agenda.

VOTE ON THE MOTION:

Yays: 7 Love, Devens, Lally, Foster, Witte, Greene and Fleming
MOTION CARRIED.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

1. **Approval of Revised Child Care Start Up and Operating Grant Programs and INNOVATION Grant Expense Categories**

MOTION: Council Member Love moved, seconded by Council Member Devens, to approve revision of child care start up and operating grant programs and INNOVATION grant expense categories.

Council Member Love asked for clarification on the amount of grant funding remaining and how much additional support Head Start would require. City Manager Nate Duval provided numbers and emphasized the desire to assist child care providers in the community who could actively use the funds ahead of the grant expiration.

Council Member Foster praised the creative utilization of funds.

VOTE ON THE MOTION

Yays: 7 - Fleming, Love, Devens, Foster, Lally, Witte and Greene
MOTION CARRIED.

2. **Approval of the 2024 Financial Audit**

MOTION: Council Member Devens moved, seconded by Council Member Witte, to approve the 2024 Financial Audit.

City Manager Duval spoke about the audit process and commented on the achievement of a clean audit.

Council Member Love, Council Member Devens, and Mayor Fleming praised the work of Altman, Rogers and Co. and the City of Valdez Finance Department.

VOTE ON THE MOTION

Yays:7 - Fleming, Love, Devens, Foster, Lally, Witte and Greene
MOTION CARRIED.

3. Discussion Item: Purchase of Lot 3, Tract K - Mineral Creek Industrial Park to Secure Dedicated Snow Storage for the City of Valdez

City Manager Duval and Public Works Director John Witte described challenges with adequate space for snow removal in the neighborhood where the property purchase was being considered.

Mayor Fleming asked about the impact of snow removal work on the ski trail. Director Witte explained how new patterns would help with ski trail accessibility.

Council Member Lally asked for clarification on the Port Valdez Company.

Council Member Love asked if snow removal had been an ongoing issue in the affected neighborhoods and the impact of new development in the area. Duval provided details on how snow removal patterns and needs had shifted with the addition of new housing and streets.

Duval described next steps for formal approval.

Love asked about the source of funding for the proposed purchase and Duval noted options including the land development reserved. Love asked for and received information about the availability of the property and timing of proposed purchase.

Director Witte explained how snow removal would be adversely impacted if the lot were not purchased.

Love asked about if code updates were needed to avoid a shortage of snow storage in the future and advocated for proactive planning. Duval noted that the issue at hand was predominately due to an undersized right of way on city land.

VIII. RESOLUTION

1. #25-34 - Amending the 2025 City Budget by Transferring \$4,500,000 of 2022 General Obligation Bond Proceeds to Municipal Well #5 Project

MOTION: Council Member Love moved, seconded by Council Member Lally, to approve Resolution 25-34.

VOTE ON THE MOTION

Yays:7 - Fleming, Love, Devens, Foster, Lally, Witte and Greene
MOTION CARRIED

2. #25-35 - Renaming the Valdez Container Terminal as the "Ryan J. Sontag Valdez Container Terminal"

MOTION: Council Member Devens moved, seconded by Council Member Witte, to approve Resolution 25-35.

Council Members Devens and Love praised the efforts of the Sontag family in Valdez and Ryan J. Sontag's contributions in particular

Love asked if a more succinct name could be possible. Ports and Harbor Director Talbot explained the possible benefit of keeping "Valdez Container Terminal" in the name.

Mayor Fleming echoed the prior positive comments.

Members of the Sontag family thanked the City Council for honoring Ryan J. Sontag's legacy.

VOTE ON THE MOTION

Yays: 7 - Fleming, Love, Devens, Foster, Lally, Witte and Greene
MOTION CARRIED.

Mayor Fleming read Resolution 25-35 into the record.

3. **#25-36 - Establishing Council Priorities for the 2026 Operating Budget**

MOTION: Council Member Lally moved, seconded by Council Member Love, to approve Resolution 25-36.

Love asked for clarification regarding cost-of-living adjustments. Budget Analyst Casey Dschaak provided context.

MOTION TO AMEND: Council Member Love moved, seconded by Council Member Foster, to amend language in the "Revenues" section, "Permanent Fund" subsection, on page one of Attachment A, the change "Management will present steps to minimize utilization of the appropriation" to "Management will present steps to minimize *and eliminate* utilization of the appropriation"

Budget and Policy Analyst Casey Dschaak noted the intent of the resolution was to provide guidance to administration on the 2026 budget.

Mayor Fleming asked City Attorney Staser about the Charter provision requiring the 1.5% draw. Staser noted that the Charter language was subject to interpretation and suggested alternative language be used.

Council Member Devens expressed concerns on the use of the word "eliminate" in reference to all future budgets.

Deputy City Clerk Sorum-Birk read the Charter language pertaining to the required annual appropriation for operating or capital expenses of 1.5% the permanent fund's market value.

Love reiterated the goal of his amendment.

MOTION TO AMEND THE AMENDMENT: Council Member Devens moved, seconded by Council Member Love, to amend the amendment replacing “minimize and eliminate” with “discontinue.”

Intent and impact of word choice was further discussed.

VOTE ON SECONDARY AMENDMENT

Yays: 6 Fleming, Love, Devens, Foster, Witte and Greene

Nays: 1 - Lally

MOTION CARRIED

VOTE ON AMENDMENT AS AMENDED

Yays:6 - Fleming, Love, Devens, Foster, Witte and Greene

Nays:1 - Lally

MOTION CARRIED

Love asked about the variability of the cost-of-living adjustment being based on the Consumer Price Index. Duval gave broad context for the practice.

Love asked about if additional information was available on utility fund rates and subsidy. Budget and Policy Analyst Dschaak noted that additional information would be provided during the budget process.

VOTE ON MAIN MOTION AS AMENDED

Yays:6 - Fleming, Love, Devens, Foster, Witte and Greene

Nays:1 - Lally

MOTION CARRIED

IX. REPORTS

1. **Monthly Treasury Report: May 2025**
2. **Monthly Treasury Report: June 2025**
3. **Report: 2025 ADEC Solid Waste Program Inspection - City of Valdez Landfills**

Council members and City Manager Duval praised the efforts of the City of Valdez's solid waste workers.

4. **Report: Issuance of Temporary Land Use Permit #25-09 for Granite Construction Company for a 1.9-acre Portion of Tract C1 ASLS 79-116 owned by the City of Valdez**
5. **Verbal Report: Monthly Projects Update**

Acting Capital Facilities Director Scott Benda updated council on the status of various capital improvement projects.

Council asked for and received additional detail on the scrap metal barge project, sewer force main replacement completion and the leaking fuel storage tank at the elementary school.

City Manager Duval highlighted the imminent completion of the park at Meals Hill.

X. CITY MANAGER / CITY CLERK / CITY ATTORNEY / MAYOR REPORTS

1. City Manager Report

City Manager Duval advised on the Reeve Air reservation process, the Puppy Paw-ty adoption event, the Director's Derby event, meeting with Representative Begich's staff in Anchorage and attendance at the Coast Guard Foundation Dinner. He reminded council about the Coast Guard Cutter Blacktip re-homeporting ceremony and Housing Subcommittee meeting to take place the following Thursday.

Mayor Fleming asked about Reeve Air operations in Fairbanks. Duval provided clarification.

Council Member Love asked about the hospital roof drain. Duval provided clarification.

2. City Clerk Report

Deputy Clerk Sorum-Birk gave an update on the new electronic voting system, advised on travel planning for the Alaska Municipal League conference, and informed Council that the open position in the Clerk's Department had been filled.

3. City Attorney Report

City Attorney Staser welcomed Council Member Greene and provided an update on:

- Escaped property litigation
- Scope of the Valdez Marine Terminal Contingency plan.
- Wrongful termination suit

He also reminded Council of the executive session taking place the following day

Council Member Love praised the progress on the escaped property litigation.

4. City Mayor Report

Mayor Fleming relayed his experiences with:

- Attending the Coast Guard Foundation dinner.
- Attending the Alaskan Tanker Company banquet.
- Hosting Senator Murkowski's visiting staff.

- Participating in the Copper Valley Electric Association tour.

XI. COUNCIL BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

Council Member Greene thanked Council for the opportunity to serve the community.

Council congratulated Greene.

Council Member Witte reminded Council of the City's employee appreciation event.

Council Member Lally thanked the Ports and Harbors Commission for their contributions.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Fleming adjourned the meeting at 8:27 p.m.

CITY OF VALDEZ, ALASKA


Dennis Fleming, Mayor

ATTEST:


Sheri L. Pierce, MMC, City Clerk

