

# City of Valdez

*212 Chenega Ave.  
Valdez, AK 99686*



## DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

**Wednesday, May 6, 2026**

**7:00 PM**

**Regular Meeting (Note Date Change Due to Municipal Election)**

**Council Chambers**

**City Council**

**REGULAR AGENDA - 7:00 PM**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Pro Tempore Love called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**III. ROLL CALL**

Present: 6 - Council Member Austin Love  
Council Member Lester Greene  
Council Member Joy Witte  
Council Member Joseph Lally  
Council Member Olivia Foster  
Council Member Jimmy Devens

Excused: 1 - Mayor Dennis Fleming

Also Present: 1 - City Manager Nathan Duval  
City Clerk Sheri Pierce  
City Attorney Jack Wakland

**IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**1. Approval of Minutes for Regular Council Meeting of April 7, 2026**

The minutes were approved by consent.

**V. PUBLIC BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR**

Sonya Ash Selanoff, coordinator for the new Chugachmiut Head Start program, shared about the timeline for operations commencing and encouraged families to apply.

**VI. CONSENT AGENDA**

**1. Approval To Go Into Executive Session, Re: Discussion of Implications for City Revenues and Litigation Strategy Regarding Trans Alaska Pipeline System Ad Valorem Tax Issues**

MOTION: Council Member Foster moved, seconded by Council Member Greene, to approve the consent agenda.

**VOTE ON MOTION**

Yays: 6 - Love, Devens, Foster, Lally, Witte and Greene  
Motion carried.

## VII. NEW BUSINESS

It was requested that Certification of Election results be moved to the first item under New Business.

### 1. Certification of Election Results for the May 5, 2026, Regular Municipal Election

MOTION: Council Member Foster moved, seconded by Council Member Witte, to certify the results of the May 5, 2026 election.

City Clerk Sheri Pierce presented her election report and noted the following candidates had been elected:

- Three-year City Council Terms: Lester Greene and James Devens
- Two-year City Council Term: Shannon Stites
- Three-year School Board Terms: Bryan Vincent and Carey Wade

#### VOTE ON MOTION

Yays: 6 - Love, Devens, Foster, Lally, Witte and Greene  
Motion carried.

### 2. Approval Captain Joe's Gas 2026 Beautification Grant Project in the Amount of \$12,500

MOTION: Council Member Foster moved, seconded by Council Member Greene, to approve Captain Joe's Gas 2026 Beautification Grant Project in the Amount of \$12,500.

Council Member Witte asked about the timing of grant fund distribution and amount of funding available for grants. Deputy City Clerk Sorum-Birk, staff liaison to the Beautification Commission, provided an overview of the program and information on annual capitalization of the reserve fund.

Council Member Witte encouraged businesses to apply.

#### VOTE ON MOTION

Yays: 6 - Love, Devens, Foster, Lally, Witte and Greene  
Motion carried.

### 3. Approval of Valdez Brewing 2026 Beautification Matching Grant Project in the Amount of \$12,050.

MOTION: Council Member Foster moved, seconded by Council Member Lally, to approve Valdez Brewing 2026 Beautification Matching Grant Project in the amount of \$12,050.

Council Member Foster suggested that additional detail related to project costs would have been beneficial in the grant application.

## VOTE ON MOTION

Yays: 6 - Love, Devens, Foster, Lally, Witte and Greene  
Motion carried.

**VIII. ORDINANCES****1. #26-03 - Amending Chapter 3.24 of the Valdez Municipal Code Titled Public Accommodation Tax (Amended). First Reading. Public Hearing.**

MOTION: Council Member Devens moved, seconded by Council Member Foster, to approve Ordinance 26-03 in first reading for public hearing.

Members of the public spoke in opposition to levying the tax on recreational vehicle parks and campgrounds citing concerns about adverse impacts to businesses, difficulty of attracting visitors to Valdez, concerns about boondocking and high prices for gasoline. General concerns were also raised about the city's large budget and already high taxes.

The following individuals spoke:

- Jeff Saxe
- Mary Baron
- Rick Ballow
- Everett Bartlett
- Dave Tousignant
- Judy Bartlett

Council Member Greene noted that he did not see this as a current need and expressed concerns about the addition of RV Parks having a negative impact. He lauded the positive economic impact of tourism and suggested that spending already collected accommodation tax revenue to attract more visitors would be more beneficial.

Council Member Witte opposed the addition of the new category noting a lack of urgency. Witte suggested that a lack of enforcement related to boondocking was already hurting businesses.

Council Member Lally agreed with Witte and Green stating a belief that the increase could damage small businesses.

Council Member Devens noted that he wished to offer an amendment removing recreational vehicles from the definitions section.

MOTION: Council Member Devens moved, seconded by Council Member Greene, to remove the words "recreational vehicle park or campground" and strike section 2 of the ordinance related to the delayed effective date for the new category.

Staff noted that the remainder of the ordinance was related to administrative clean-up of the existing public accommodation tax code and that the effective date section needed to be addressed in the amendment.

Council Member Devens explained that the intent of the amendment was to address the concerns of the business owners and voiced his support for the remaining underlying administrative changes.

Council Member Foster asked for and received clarification on what RV Park and Campground businesses paid for water, sewer and trash services in comparison to hotels.

Council Member Love explained his support for inclusion of RV parks and campgrounds noting that the goal of the revenue was to support economic development and tourism. He expressed a desire for the annual revenue to continue to be used to support the local visitor economy and encouraged businesses to engage. He spoke to a desire to spread the burden beyond brick-and-mortar businesses.

Lally spoke about rising costs and explained it as a potential impediment to tourism and disincentive to visitors.

Devens stated his agreement with Love in principle and general support for a more equitable tax citing the relatively low cost per stay to be borne by the visitor. He explained that his amendment was offered based on the recent major increases in gas prices and already increased cost to over-road visitors highlighting the importance of maintaining visitor services.

Witte encouraged a focus on using the existing revenue well and successfully before expanding the public accommodation tax revenue base.

Foster voiced her opposition to the amendment noting that hotels had carried the burden for years and that recreational vehicle parks had always benefited. She expressed a view that all hospitality businesses should contribute.

Member of the public, Jeff Saxe, highlighted the amount of money that local recreational vehicle parks put toward visitor marketing each year and highlighted the taxes and fees already paid to the city.

Member of the public, John Witte, suggested that if Council chose to diversify the tax base, they may want to consider lowering the tax.

Member of the public, Mary Baron, noted that RV Parks did not provide beds, but rather parking spaces and highlighted local business efforts at marketing Valdez.

Member of the public, Judy Bartlett, compared city harbor services and cruise ship docking to RV Park services.

#### VOTE ON MOTION TO AMEND

Yays: 4 - Devens, Lally, Witte and Greene

Nays: 2 - Love and Foster

Motion carried.

VOTE ON MAIN MOTION AS AMENDMENT

Yays: 6 - Love, Devens, Foster, Lally, Witte and Greene  
Motion carried.

***Council Member Lally excused himself from the meeting.***

**2. #26-04 - Repealing and Reenacting Title 16 of the Valdez Municipal Code Titled Subdivisions. First Reading. Public Hearing.**

MOTION: Council Member Foster moved, seconded by Council Member Greene, to approve Ordinance 26-04 in first reading.

City Manager Duval and Community Development Director Huber provided an overview of the process that had taken place with the input of Planning and Zoning Commission and guidance of contractors, including public outreach.

Duval explained the difference of opinion between administration and the Planning and Zoning Commission on phrasing related to dedication of snow lots.

Huber provided an overview of significant process changes made by the ordinance including allowing for administrative approvals in certain cases. She added context about the overall process and public comments received.

Council Member Foster thanked Director Huber and Community Development Department staff for their continued efforts on land use code rewrites.

Council Member Devens asked for and received additional clarity on the snow storage dedication language and recommendation of the Planning and Zoning Commission. Discussion on differences between dedication and deeding of snow storage lots.

Council Member Love asked about the public comments received. Director Huber proved specific additional details about technical comments from surveyors and role played by the consultants.

VOTE ON MOTION

Yays: 5 - Love, Devens, Foster, Witte and Greene  
Motion carried.

**3. #26-05 - Amending Chapter 2.52 of the Valdez Municipal Code Titled Planning and Zoning Commission (Amended). First Reading. Public Hearing.**

MOTION: Council Member Foster moved, seconded by Council Member Greene, to approve Ordinance 26-05 on first reading.

City Manager Duval noted the need the ordinance was to align duties of the commission with new plating processes in Title 16.

City Clerk Sheri Pierce noted an inadvertent omission of commission term length in the ordinance and asked that an amendment be offered to correct the issue.

MOTION: Council Member Love moved, seconded by Council Member Witte, to amend section 2.52.060 by adding "for a staggered 3-year term" after the words "city council".

VOTE ON MOTION TO AMEND

Yays: 5 - Love, Devens, Foster, Witte and Greene  
Motion carried.

VOTE ON MAIN MOTION AS AMENDMENT

Yays: 5 - Love, Devens, Foster, Witte and Greene  
Motion carried.

**IX. RESOLUTIONS**

**1. #26-28 - Establishing the 2026 Rate of Real Property Tax and Designating the Number of Mills for Each Dollar of Real Property to be Levied for Municipal and School Purposes**

MOTION: Council Member Foster moved, seconded by Council Member Greene, to approve Resolution 26-28.

Council Member Love commented on the "over the cap" revenue and its use to pay down of debt for the sewer force main and other bonds.

VOTE ON MOTION

Yays: 5 - Love, Devens, Foster, Witte and Greene  
Motion carried.

**2. #26-29 - Naming Rates and Fees for Use of Facilities in the Valdez Harbors and Repealing Resolution 24-51 Formerly Naming Such Rates and Fees**

MOTION: Council Member Foster moved, seconded by Council Member Greene, to approve Resolution 26-29.

Council Member Foster noted a typo in the resolution.

Council Member Love asked about the financial forecast and estimated revenue. Harbormaster Sarah Von Barga noted an anticipated addition of \$138,000 in revenue and goal of the harbor not needing to be subsidized. Discussion continued about consistency provided by inclusion of the embedded consumer price index metric.

VOTE ON MOTION

Yays: 5 - Love, Devens, Foster, Witte and Greene  
Motion carried.

### **3. #26-30 - Amending the 2026 City Budget by Transferring \$23,000 from the Budget Variance Reserve to the Fire/EMS Department for Professional Fees and Services Budget**

MOTION: Council Member Foster moved, seconded by Council Member Greene, to approve Resolution 26-30.

#### **VOTE ON MOTION**

Yays: 5 - Love, Devens, Foster, Witte and Greene

Motion carried.

## **X. REPORTS**

1. Monthly Treasury Report - March 2026

## **XI. CITY MANAGER / CITY CLERK / CITY ATTORNEY / MAYOR REPORTS**

### **1. City Manager Report**

City Manager Duval provided updates on the following:

- Encouraging attendance at the upcoming Tourism Task Force Open House.
- Thanking election workers.
- Inclusion of the travel-lift request in the Alaska Municipal League's major equipment grant request submission.
- Sharing questions from the Providence Valdez Medical Center Community Advisory Council
- Thanking outgoing Public Works Director John Witte for his work as he transitioned out of the position.

### **2. City Clerk Report**

City Clerk Pierces shared about:

- The success of the local election and hard work of election workers and Elections Coordinator Katie Carr.
- The date change for the next regular Council meeting to allow Clerk's Office staff to attend the International Institute of Municipal Clerks Conference.
- A reminder of upcoming Board of Equalization hearing dates.

### **3. City Attorney Report**

City attorney Jack Wakeland noted that his update was specific to Trans Alaska Pipeline System tax issues and would be shared in executive session.

### **4. City Mayor Report**

Mayor Pro Tem Love noted that it was Nurses' Day recognized Council Member Foster for her work in that field. He shared his experience attending the PWSRCAC reception and noted he would be providing a welcome during that group's board meeting. He also noted

the importance of SERVS Fishing vessel training and thanked outgoing Director John Witte for his contributions to the city.

**XII. COUNCIL BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR**

Council Members touched on Nurses' Week and shared thanks with Council Member Foster and other professionals in the field. They expressed gratitude for the work of Public Works Director John Witte and wished him well. Members also thanked Clerk's Office staff and election workers for their efforts with the municipal election.

Council Member Witte also shared her experience attending the Copper Valley Electric Association Annual Meeting.

**XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**XIV. RETURN FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Mayor Pro Tempore Love announced that an update on legal matter related to Trans Alaska Pipeline System tax issues had been shared during executive session.

**XV. ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Pro Tempore Love adjourned the meeting at 8:54 p.m.